Volume 02

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Chapter 01: The immortal Boy and passing everyday Life

“Kyaa! Help me!”
A piteous scream, breaking the silence, resounded.
“Shut up and behave!”
Disturbing it, an audacious voice overlaid it.
Seeing that sequence, I thought what a stereotypical scene it was.
It took place at a deserted warehouse.
In front of me were a couple of boys and a single female student that was caught with her hands tied behind her back.
The boys were wearing uniformity school uniforms with a stand-up collar, had uniform chinking metal accessories on their bodies and made an ill-bred face in unison. In short, they were hoodlums. The perfect example of their kind, they could commonly be found all over the world, in every country, meaningless rebelled against the world and even though they had the motto to live freely without being restricted by anything, they all dressed the same, spoke the same and acted the same. Well, in other words, they were malcontent with the non-individual society.
“Listen, Node! Move even a finger and this girl is dead!”
Spouting a third rate remark that you wouldn’t even hear in a movie nowadays, one of the hoodlums threatened me.
“Noo— Save me!”
The captured female student sought my help. A knife was thrust before her throat.
“…..”
I made an extremely long sigh.
—Actually, how did it come to this?
The day was supposed to have started with a perfect peacefully morning…
My mind forcefully tried to recall the origin of the events.
Though that probably was nothing but an escapism from this situation—-
I actually wanted to do so myself, so I didn’t give an objection.
…Thinking back on it, there had been a sign since the way to school.
July had come.
That said, nothing special happened and if anything, the summer of my senior year in high school had descended upon me. Some people in my class started to prepare for the entrance exams next year, but for my part, I hadn’t decided on my future plans yet. For now I thought I should at least go to university and told my homeroom teacher so, but I hadn’t a clear goal. Well, that aside now.
Seasonal it was the end of the rainy season, but the dark clouds that had occupied the sky for the last month had vanished, colouring the sky in a dark blue, derived from other colours. The sun emitted strong rays as to display it’s own duty, gradually roasting my body.
“So hot…”
What was up with this heat? It felt like I was in an open toaster. No, this wasn’t an accurate comparison, but more like a figurative one. A pincer attack from the sunlight above and the asphalt that heated up by absorbing it, violated my mind, bereaving it of the will to study. It made me consider to turn on my heels and return home, but I was attending school with the money from my older sister, whom I lived together with. I couldn’t afford to skip. Besides,

the municipal Meitou Academy I attended thankfully had air conditioners installed in the classrooms. In other words, as long as I endure the trip to the classroom, heaven was waiting for me. Time-wise, I just had to endure this ascesis for three minutes.
—It happened at that time.
“…is not good!”
I could hear a voice of someone complaining about something.
“Huh!? Say what!”
A threatening voice replied to it.
What was happening in his frigging heat so early in the morning… I raised my head and looked, whereupon I saw a group of people apart of the mass of students on their way to school while fighting against the heat like myself.
The couple of boy, wearing their uniforms slovenly, formed a circle and surrounded someone.
“Not a nice way…”
I mumbled. Their stand-up collars were the same, but there was a subtle difference. They were from… the Sakuragaoka High School. I came across something troublesome.
Sakuragaoka was a public school near Meitou Academy, but it was famous for the bad attitude and grades of it’s students. Many of them were vicious and there was a unconfirmed rumour that 80% of the graduates got devilish jobs. Due to the proximity, some of Meitou Academy’s students had been target and harmed by the guys from Sakuragaoka. Just taking their money would be one thing, but they even picked fights or bullied to kill time. There were various reports about victims, like being dragged through the town tied to a bike, being stripped of all clothes or being tied to the front gate of Meitou Academy until morning. For the students of Meitou Academy, they were only an object of fear.
Recently there seemed to be guys, who appeared on our way to school and extorted money, which worried the teachers a lot. I saw scenes like that a couple of times too, but passed by while pretending not to see it at all. Because nothing would come out of getting involved with guys like that. For weak ones that goes without saying, but even when you were stronger in fights than them, they would chase after you if you got somehow involved with them even once. Needless to say, not in a good way, but a bad one. I knew that by a rule of thumb, because I knew other similar people. As everyone else knew that too, they avoided the group.
Still, they must be really bored, seeing as it was so early in the morning. While thinking so, I too tried to avoid—
“Like I told you, apologize. You can’t do this!”
I stopped.
The tall boys surrounded a girl and boy. Both of them wore the Meitou Academy uniform. The boy had fallen on his behind and dumbfounded watched the course of events. Seeing as his uniform was dirty on all sides and his cheek had a bruise, it was probably him that got involved with them. And standing covering in front of him, fiercely opposing the boys was a short female student. Her long hair was braided into a pigtail, which reached till her waist. She was showing her anger by wrinkling her brow, regretfully it had no effect due to her young features.
“The heck’s up with ya? What’re ya to him!?”
A loud and audacious voice answered her. It passed off as a valid threat.
“I’m attending the same school as him!”
The girl claimed that as reason enough for her act. But naturally, the boys made a doubtful face.
“Huh!? Just that!?”
I thought the same. The motive of the short female girl that could pass off as a middle schooler, to help the male student that got involved with these sort of Yakuza reserve guys, just from the fact that they attended the same school was a little, no, rather insufficient. But even so, the girl nodded like it was something strange.
“Yeah! So, why did you hit him? What did he do wrong?”
The female student asked so, whereas the boys looked at each other in disbelief and one of them return his gaze. Then he gave the male student on the ground a glance and raised one corner of his mouth.
“…Yeah, he did.”
“And what?”
“Ya see, we’re short on money. We’re like seriously poor. So we talked about lending us a bit of pocket money, but he refused, ya know. I was just so sad, that I unconsciously… ya know.”

As his own contrived remark was amusing, the boy laughed together with his friends after he finished his sentence.
“…Is that so.”
The female student said so and cast down her face in thought. When I observed the scene, she slowly raised her head after a moment of silence. Then,
“Okay, I understand.”
She said.
“Then I’ll lend you some.”
“…Huh?”
One these words, not only the boys were puzzled, but me as well. For a moment, we didn’t know what she meant.
The female student reached into the pocket of her skirt and took out a wallet in a light pink colour. Checking the contents, she tried to take out a couple of bill and groaned a bit. When she withdraw her fingers for a moment, she nodded and took out all bills. While holding them out to the boys, she said.
“I’ll lend you the money. It isn’t much, but that’s all I have. I’m sorry. But no more hitting. If you aren’t sincere when asking a favour, no one’ll listen.”
“…Seriously?”
One of the boys grunted. From what I could see, the money in the hands of the female students were around 20.000 yen. A good amount to play around with. The female student said “Feel free to take it” with a smile.

“Is she insane…?”
The boy, turning around to his friends and uttering that, turned back right away and alternatively looked at the female student and money. After he confirmed that the girl apparently wasn’t saying that as a joke or lie, he smirked.
“…I see. Well, in that case, I’ll borrow it from ya. Thanks.”
“No problem.”
The boy reached his fingers for the bill.
…Oh boy, I grumbled. I had wondered what would happen, but to think it would develop into this.
I quietly approached the group and called out from behind them.
“Are you stupid?”
The female student looked at my face through the gap between the boys and widened her eyes in surprise.
“Kugi-chan!”
“I told you to stop calling me that.”
The boys turned around all at once. I sighed while massaging my temples.
“Stop setting new records for the Guinness book of idiots every day. Though I certainly don’t get sick of watching you.”
Forcefully shoving aside the guys that glared at me with question marks, I snatched away the bills from the hand of the female student.
“Gimme your wallet, Kuon.”
On my words, the female student— Kuon Rin tilted her head.
“Why?”
“Just do it.”
Rin was puzzled, but soon after handed me her wallet. When I opened the wallet and put back the bills, I returned it to Rin.
“Oh my, what’s up, Kugi-chan? Will you lend them the money?”
“As if. How about you start doubting people already?”
“What do you mean?”
“…Forget it.”
I sighed and took Rin’s arm.

“We’re going now, or we’ll be late.”
Then I said to the unknown male student sitting on the ground.
“Hey, I don’t care if you wanna sit there forever, but here’s a piece of advice: You better get out of here.”
The male student was absent-minded for a while, but jolted up on my words, then left the place with a “H- Hii!” shriek.
“We’re going too, Kuon.”
“Eh, but Kugi-chan, they need—”
“Hey Bastard, stop meddling!”
A rough hand grabbed me on my shoulder. I said peacefully without turning around.
“Isn’t that what you guys have been doing just now?”
“Say what?”
“Stop touching me so casually. Your stench will rub off.”
“Bastard, ya pickin’ a fight!?”
“…Huh?”
I only turned around my head. In that moment, the frightening look of the boy glaring at me crumbled.
“Hiii…!”
“You’re the ones, who’re picking a fight.”
There were two sorts of anger. First, revealing a raging expression and second, keeping a deathly cold mordancy. The one I used right now was the latter. Moreover, to intensify my natural evil look even more, I glared angrily with all my might.
“I suppressed my sleepiness and diligently went to school, so stop ruining my mood with your idiotic behaviour.”
“Sh— Shaddap. Ya screwin’ with us, huh!?”
He did his best to counter. But hearing an advice from his friend from behind, the boy changed the colour of his face.
“H- Hey… That girl called him Kugi earlier. Isn’t that… Node Kugito?”
“Wha— Node Kugito!?”
Facing me again at a slapping pace, he screamed “N- No way!?”.
“Node Kugito means… the one controlling all nearby high schools—”
“Yeah, rumour says he half-killed a passing 100-man biker gang all at once just because he couldn’t hear the TV.”
“From what I heard, he beat up a store clerk that accused him of shop-lifting and even knocked out more than 20 other customers that came to stop him…”
“It’s said he massacred the police that came to question him without any hesitation!!?”
“His police file apparently has written ‘A minor that might cause a serious crime in the future that will shake the whole country’ in it!”
…No, only the first one was true. Well, that too only came about from a misunderstand of a misunderstanding.
“Rather than exaggerating a rumour, they gave it a whole new story…”
“Kugi-chan…”
“Don’t believe it!”
“Just kidding.”
Geez— Well, the boys looked really frightened, so it worked out in my favour.
“Okay, if you know all that, get back to your own school already. I’m Node Kugito. I’m sca~ry. I’ll eat you up.”
“H- Hiii! He even swings that way!”
“Don’t understand it in a twisted meaning! Just get lost!”
On my roar, the boys cowered away in fright and one of them used abusive language with “F- Fuck!”.
“So ya Node Kugito, but so what!?”
“Huh? Wanna go at it?”
“N- No, I do not, but…”
Then he looked at his friends as to give them instructions— All of them shook their heads and apparently decided to retreat.
“Damnit! We’ll remember this!”
Leaving behind an out-of-date sharp parting remark, they left.

“…They made me waste my energy so early in the morning.”
“You sure are famous, Kugi-chan.”
“In a bad way.”
“But… I wonder if they’ll be alright without money.”
“If they want money, they should work.”
Saying so, I looked wearily at Rin.
“Anyway, you just don’t change.”
“What?”
“Nothing.”
Shrugging my shoulders, I made a somewhat bitter smile.
To be frank, this girl called Kuon Rin was a “good-natured person”. She long had crossed the level of just being a nice or kind person. Being a volunteer meant to act without compensation, to have desire to take the initiative to help others and aid those in trouble without regards for your own, just like earlier. An existence that could only be called a miracle in the current world. Normally, people like that had some kind of hidden agenda. Some dedicated themselves to good deeds for the reason of wanting prestige or honour instead of money. At first I thought Rin was one of them. But I realized she wasn’t by spending time with her. Just like we didn’t scrutinize why we’re breathing, she naturally tried to assist people or matters. She was that kind of person.
Becoming classmates with me in our second year, Rin became unmindful attached to me, a cranky guy with a vicious character, which was quite questionable. I asked the reason for it before, but… even so I had a hard time accepting it. Well, that aside now.
“Anyway, you only just got out of the hospital, so don’t overdo it.”
“…Yeah, sorry.”
“Well, it’s certainly typical for you.”
Making a wry smile, I lightly hit Rin’s head.
It happened a couples of month ago— Rin became the victim of a certain serial killer incident. That said, she miraculously escaped death, completed a painful rehabilitation and was released from the hospital not long ago.
The culprit was called the ≪cross-slashing Devil≫ by the mass media from the fact that he always left a cross shaped wound on his victims, got the nickname ≪Midnight killing Devil≫ on the internet and threw society into an uproar, but was caught soon after attacking Rin. As he was a minor, it was only known that he was a student living in the capital. At large, it was accepted as that.
The case was closed and now, neither the TV, nor the internet picked up on it anymore. That was how it always went. Unless it was a related person, people‘s interest only lasted from the incident till it‘s settlement. No audience would keep looking at the closed curtains of a stage.
Until just recently, I had been the same, so I was in no position to complain.
Well, either way, it had become peaceful. There was nothing better than that.
Rin had been bothered by a curious lot right after her recovery, but probably because I was always around her, their numbers decreased soon enough and now none of them were left. If it hadn‘t been Rin, I would have remained a bystander, but… I just couldn‘t leave her alone. Besides, I couldn‘t really say that I was completely unrelated to the incident that involved Rin.
No, actually— It might be more correct to say I was right in the middle of it.
“By the way, where’s Kirisaki-san?”
On Rin’s sudden question, I tilted my head.
“Who knows. Guess she’s already at school.”
“Oh, you didn’t come together? Even though you’re a couple.”
“…..”
I had an innumerable heap of things that I wanted to reply to these words, but I swallowed down all of these and said quietly.
“…Well, it’s annoying how she clings to me all the time anyway.”
“I see. Guess that’s how it goes.”
Rin nodded assenting.

…I had forgotten, or rather I wanted to forget, but there was another girl that treated me intimately due to some kind of karma besides Rin, even though I was avoided even at school because I had weird rumours, mentioned by the delinquents earlier, about me, additionally to the terms “Vicious character – Vicious behaviour – Vicious looks”.
Well, in her case though, she was troublesome in a different way from Rin…
When I made a vexed face, the first chime rang.
“Ah, class’ going to start.”
“Oh, right, let’s hurry.”
Rin nodded to my words and started walking. I too was going to follow her, whereupon—
“Node-san!”
I froze up on the voice calling out to me.
I turned around with crude moments like from a broken mechanical doll.
A single female student was hurrying over to me with her breath out of order. Her hair cut around the tip of her shoulders, her skin white as porcelain and her finely chiselled features that made you gulp—. With that appearance she could pass off as some kind of high-class lady. Yes, just speaking by appearance.
“Good. I left a bit late and then heard from your sister that you had already headed out, so I hurried after you.”
The female student came rushing over to my side with a smile.
“…Oh great.”
I waved to Rin, who had stopped and turned around to me, to go on ahead. Waiting until she was gone, I faced forward.
When the female student stopped besides me, she lowered her head with a grin.
“Good morning, Node-san.”
It was a polite greeting that would impress ten out of ten boys. And this female student, still showing a charming smile,
“Yay!”
suddenly stabbed my body with the big knife she was holding in her hand while raising a cute voice.
“Ugh!”
I made a groan like ten out of ten boys would have undoubtedly made.
“K- Kirisaki, you…”
“It is such a pleasant morning, Node Kugito-san!”
The female student— Kirisaki Kyouko said so with a refreshing smile while stirring up my insides with her blade.

At the same time the first period ended, I used the short break to forcefully drag Kirisaki to the deserted back of the gym. Thanks to the shadow of the building, the sun wasn‘t so strong anymore, but in exchange there was a discomforting hot humidity.
“What is the matter, Node-san? Dragging me to such a dark place…”
After Kirisaki made a confused expression, she suddenly widened her eyes as she realized something and put her hand on her mouth.
“Don’t tell me, Node-san! No way, at school… We cannot.”
Blushing and averting her eyes, she fidgeted her toes against each other.
“I am aware that a man of your age is tormented by that impulse day by day. And as your lover, I am happy to comply to that desire. But even so, to conduct such an improper act at this upright institution for education—”
“Did the heat melt your brain?”
I made a grand sigh with my arms crossed.
“Either way, stop talking like that. There’s no one but us here right now.”
“Guess so.”
Easily overthrowing her attitude on my cue, Kirisaki got a haughty tone, which was completely different from before.
“So, what’s up? If you say you can’t hold back your urges, I won’t object to take care of it as your girlfriend. Although, unnecessary rumours’ll spread if you mess up my clothes, so just a Fella—”
“You’re still talking about the same stuff, just with a different tone!”
I merciless dropped a chop on her head.

“Ow.”
“It’s you, who’s in heat all year!”
“How rude. As the saint Lady I am, I can’t really let that slide.”
“What Saint would stab others first thing in the morning!”
“Here. This one!”
“Here, huh. Oh? In your head!?”
Saying so, I grabbed Kirisaki’s head on both sides and shook it with all my might.
“Awawawa.”
After shaking it to my heart’s content, I released her. Kirisaki babbled nonsense with “The world… The world is spinning. It’s the boundary to multiverse…” while staggering.
“Geez… That’s what I wanted to discuss.”
“The boundary to multiverse? Based on the possibilities of commonly known parallel universes—”
“Nah, talk about that with your beloved friends from the different dimensions.”
I said while looking a head down to Kirisaki.
“Aren’t you going overboard a bit lately?”
“Overboard? What you mean?”
“Your stabbing.”
On my words, Kirisaki raised an eyebrow.
“That’s not true. I keep it down to once in the morning, twice in the noon and five times after school.”
“Going by these numbers, it would mean that eight people die every day.”
“No worries. I avoid vital spots, so it’s probably only around three people.”
“Only insurer would be happy to hear that.”
“Muh…”
Mumbling so and looking down, Kirisaki entwined her fingers near her stomach.
“Sure, I know that I’m overdoing it a bit…”
More or less, she seemed to reflect on her actions. I made a light sigh.
“Well, I agreed going out with you, which meant accepting that impulse of yours.”
But, I continued.
“I didn’t say you can stab me at any time. Only when you can’t hold back it anymore. Do you get that?”
“I do, but on reflex—”
“I won’t let you kill me every day from a reflex.”
I said wearily.
“I told you before, but I’m only ≪immortal≫. I still feel pain.”
“…Mh, right.”
Kirisaki quietly apologized with “…Sorry” while still looking down.
“Well, as long as you understand—”
However, I suddenly thought. For an bystander, this talk about stabbing and not stabbing must be unbelievable.
…It was hard to explain the relationship between this girl, Kirisaki Kyouko, and myself, Node Kugito, with one word.
For outward appearance, we were technically a loving couple. Apparently others still couldn’t believe that Kirisaki, looking like a well-protected lady, was in such a relationship with me, famous for my vicious cruelty that even other school feared (though it was a misunderstanding). I used apparently, because I still hadn’t had a proper conversation with my classmates in the 2nd and 3rd year. They were surely avoiding me, but I didn’t saw the necessity to approach them by myself either, partly leaving the situation alone. Even so, I sometimes heard them whisper to each other. Stuff like I forced Kirisaki to become my girlfriend, since I had dirt on her, or that Kirisaki was attracted to the wild (smooth word) type, contrary to her well-protected upbringing. There were others, but altogether most of the rumours were about me courting Kirisaki. But, that was greatly different from reality.
To be precise, it was Kirisaki that courted me. And not just as a lover—
but as someone she could stab with a knife any time.
Simply said, Kirisaki was a ≪stabbing Maniac≫.
In general it was needed to comfort yourself to ease sexual excitation, the so called masturbation. Of course there

was the option of sex as well, but most minors stopped their own desire with the former.
But for Kirisaki it was slaying. Stabbing a person, gouging the flesh and touching the insides— that was the only way to restraint Kirisaki's sexual urge.
There was a reason to why I used the suggestive phrase "At large, it was accepted as that" for the official criminal profile regarding the solution of the ≪Midnight killing Devil≫ incident earlier.
To be truth, the girl in front of me was the real ≪Midnight killing Devil≫. Of course the captured culprit committed various incidents. But he was just a copycat criminal.
Kirisaki was unable to suppress the desire that arose in her own body and killed numerous people. Pretty much like humans couldn't fully abandon their sexual excitation in obeying that instinct. Constantly pained by that for a long time, Kirisaki kept going through loneliness to not get involved with anyone at least, but she met me and saw hope.
Because I was an ≪immortal boy≫.
It was by no means figurative. I had an immortal body.
Even if I was stabbed, cut, jumped off a tall building, run over by a 4t truck or stayed in a room full of gas, I would never die. As for why I had a body like that, I would like to know that as well. Ever since I could remember, it had been like this. Due to the vicious looks I was born with, delinquents from all kinds of school picked fights with me, but I never retaliated and they just collapsed on their own, which raised weird rumours like a dawn thanks to due my body.
Kirisaki had said: With you, I no longer have to kill people. Please go out with me.
It was impossible to stop Kirisaki from murdering. Even if she was caught by the police, put into rehabilitation as a minor and got out there— In time she would repeat the same thing. Pretty much like you couldn't prohibit people from having sex or masturbate forever.
Therefore I accepted her request. When my stupid, unproductive and useless ability could save someone—
I knew that Kirisaki's sin could never be forgiven. But even so, I couldn't hate Kirisaki from the bottom of my heart. It might be because she loathed what she did herself as something hideous. Killing, even though she didn't want to. Hurting, even though she didn't want to— Kirisaki must have lived her whole life with that dilemma.
Besides— Right now, Kirisaki tried to accept judgment by doing a "certain something":
I couldn't decided if that was alright or not. But I believed it to be an option.
"…Anyway, promise me."
"Promise?"
I said to Kirisaki, who had raised her head.
"At school, only one stab per day. Also, don't use your knife in public."
"Mh… I agree with only using the knife in front of you, but as for only one stab… as least make it twice."
"No. Only one."
"Y- You should have days too, where you want to do things twice a day!"
"…. Only one."
"You just thought about it! For a moment you hesitated, thinking 'Guess so…'!"
"I did not! Don't make assumptions! Say what you want, but it's only one!"
"…Muh. Okay."
Kirisaki nodded, even while puffing up her cheeks a bit.
"To begin with, you gain nothing from being with me. I can't say anything against you."
"Yep, yep. I'm glad you're quick to understand."
At that time, the chime rang conveniently.
"Oh… Time to go. Well, we have an agreement now."
"Yeah."
I raised my hand with "I'm going on ahead" and tried to leave.
But— some kind of strong power grabbed my uniform and I stopped.
"…What?"
Looking backward, I asked Kirisaki, who for some reason pulled out my shirt from my trousers and exposed my skin.
"Well—"
Kirisaki looked at me and said with a flushed face while sparkling her eyes.

“….Let me stab you one last time before the promise?”
“:….No.”
Thin fabric flattered softly. When she raised her skirt, the all too familiar bear imprinted panties came into vision.
Kirisaki drew her favourite knife from the holster on her thigh—
“There.”
and merciless thrust it into my side.
“Ugh!”
A dull pain ran through my body. When I glared at her with “You little!”, Kirisaki showed a cheerful smile.
She didn’t understand it after all.

A whistle sounded.
The runners started and headed for the 100 meter away goal, jumping over hurdles one after another.
The athletic ones easily jumped over them, but the others got entangled in them many times. Every time, they suffered wounds, but stood up while enduring the pain. The outline of athletic abilities could also be a miniature copy of life.

At any rate, was there any meaning in testing the physical strength by jumping over hurdles?
While thinking about that, I watched my classmates how they kept eagerly jumping over the hurdles, and slob around in the shadows. To be honest, I was surprised how they could move around in this damn heat.
“Ah, a truant.”
I turned to the voice from behind. It was Rin. As she wasn’t over the worst yet, she was observing today with her uniform. …Though for some reason, she wore the school’s assigned bloomers at the bottom.
“I’m not a truant.”
“Then what are you doing?”
“Somehow I didn’t have difficulty to not pull myself together, so I discreetly told the teacher that I didn’t feel no headache while glaring at him a tiny little bit, whereupon he said with a drawn face that I should rest.”
“Totally a truant! You casually threatened the teacher!”
“Idiots are useful.”
“Geez. You will have to make up for it after school anyway, since it’s a test.”
“It’ll have cooled down then. Anyway, what’s up with these clothes?”
“Oh, this? Because my uniform would get dirty when I sit down.”
I see. Still a weird style.
“Reminds me, I saw someone like you in front of the station the other day.”
“Really? What a strange person.”
“Yeah. For some reason, she had a big sign with ‘5000 yen per hour’ written on it.”
“5000yen per hour for what?”
“Dreams.”
Rin tilted her head ignorant and shifted her gaze forward, whereupon she said “Ah”.
“It’s Kirisaki-san.”
I followed her gaze and indeed there was standing a familiar girl at the starting position. That itself wasn’t strange, as the physical tests at our Meitou school were conducted in co-ed. What was strange however was her action. Kirisaki started with a ladylike, yet smooth run without any preciosity, then jumped over many hurdles. She was rather fast compared to her movements. I could understand why the nearby people were surprised.
Just when I thought that, she got entangled on a hurdle near the goal and tripped grand. Our classmates hastily rushed over. They called out to her with Are you okay? or Are you hurt?, whereas Kirisaki stood up while wiping off the sand and showed a smile.

“Yes, I am fine. Excuse me, I have no athletic sense…”
One female student praised Kirisaki, who took a depressed breath, with “That’s not true. You’re good. Until midway you had the best time, even counting in the boys”.
“No, you are exaggerating… Uhm, forgive me for causing you troubles.”
A couple of students gave the humble Kirisaki words with the meaning that she didn’t really had to apologize. While having various people worry about her, Kirisaki started running for the goal again.
“…She’s hard-working too.”
Completely different from her usual character.
Except in front of me, Kirisaki’s tone and behaviour apparently was “to smooth out relationships with others”.
Showing an clumsy behaviour like earlier was for that too. Normally she was a girl with monstrous physical abilities.
As proof for that, I had once seen Kirisaki palter with an opponent with moves from an action movie.
Well, it wasn’t like she was acting a different character to deceive other, but only did so to avoid unnecessary troubles within the class. In reality I thought she was doing well. A feat that I couldn’t pull off. But when I, knowing the truth, saw her turning her face downward with downcast eyes and “Oh no…”, I felt like taking the back on my head and slamming it onto the ground while saying “GAW!”.
“I wonder if she’s fine…”
“Mostly. You just watch quietly.”
When I stopped Rin from standing up, she worriedly watched for a while, but when she saw Kirisaki return to the others with a smile after she finished her hurdle run, Rin sat down again relieved.
“…Hey, Kugi-chan.”
“Mh?”
Watching Kirisaki, Rin said.
“Kirisaki-san smiles more often now.”
“Yeah? Didn’t she always do?”
At least in front of everyone.
“…Mhm~”
Rin groaned, then reluctantly consented by mumbling “Guess so…”.
“What?”
“No. Kirisaki-san certainly has been smiling ever since she transferred, but— I got the feeling she put up a distance.”
“A distance?”
“Yeah. I can’t express it well, but it’s like she’s smiling without smiling. Like she’s smiling to keep people at a certain distance, but not allowing them any closer… Mhm.”
…I was a bit surprised. For Rin, that was a really sharp observation. Looking at my face, Rin made a wry smile.
“Sorry, it might be just my imagination… I was like that too not long ago. I didn’t want to get hated or left out.”
I had heard about that already before. Apparently Rin temporarily received something similar to bullying because of her mindset of volunteering. Well, even now she conveniently used as an errand-girl. People really hated easily understood benevolence. For example, there were guys that insulted a person that held a donation box as a hypocrite, that there was no proof that anyone would be saved by doing that. But I believed that those, who didn’t do anything, had no rights to deny those, who were trying to do something. Therefore I honestly thought that Rin was remarkable and one of the few people I respected in the world. But even so, there were people, who didn’t even try to understand people like Rin. That was reality.
“So I can somewhat tell. But… now she’s different. It’s not complete change, but I get the feeling she’s interacting with others a bit more natural.”
“Really? …I can’t tell.”
“Yeah, ever since— she started dating you, Kugi-chan.”
Ahh… I kind of consented. With me by her side, Kirisaki no longer needed to suppress her self. Therefore she might show a bit more emotions than before.
“Kirisaki-san is lucky.”
“…Why?”
When I asked, Rin said “Ah” with a face like she had returned to her senses and shook her head.

“F- Forget it.”
“I see.” Fine then.
But for some reason Rin then averted her eyes awkwardly and started to fidget around. Her face was a bit red.
“What’s up with you? Did the heat get to you? Are you okay?”
“Eh? Ah, yeah. Ehm… I’m fine.”
“I’ll go dampen a handkerchief. Wait a moment.”
“Eh, y- you don’t need to, I’m fine.”
“I’m thirsty and want to drink some water anyway, so it’s on the way.”
I said so and stood up.
I went to the water fountain and twisted the faucet. When I held my handkerchief under the powerful stream of water, I saw a silhouette in the corner of my vision. When I faced it, there stood an unfamiliar male student. Judging by his gym wear, he must be a classmate. …But did our class had a guy like him?
“U- Uhm, Node…-kun.”
“What?”
I had spoken to him normally, but he cowered away.
“I, I’m sorry.”
“No, don’t apologize all of a sudden. Who’re you?”
“I, I’m Saitou… Your classmate.”
Saitou… Saitou—
“Mh, no clue, none.”
“I, I see. Ehm, you helped me today…”
These words made me finally remember. The guy that got involved with the delinquents from Sakuragaoka this morning.
“It wasn’t me, but Kuon. Say your thanks to her.”
“Y- Yeah. Ehm…”
“What, got more to say?”
When I asked, Gotou… no, I mean, Saitou trembled his body with a shiver again and held out a piece of paper with
“Uh- Uhm— take this.”
“What’s that?”
“I, I was told… to hand it you.”
“By whom?”
“T- Take it.”
“I asked by whom.”
“Please!”
Saitou said so with a shrill voice and forced the paper onto me.
“Hey, wait!” I called him to a stop while turning around, but he left the place with an unexpected speed.
“…What was that.”
I looked down on the paper while tilting my head. When I unfolded it, I could see that something was written on it. Seemed like it was a letter.
“A love letter?”
I answered the sudden familiar voice without changing my posture.
“Might be.”
“Even though you already have me… is what I always wanted to say, since I love stereotypical remark, but how was it?”
“It was rather unpleasant.”
When I shifted my gaze back, there stood Kirisaki with her arms crossed.
“What about class?”
“I never expected a truant to worry about that. I told them I would go wash the scratch I got and came here. After all I saw you unusually speaking with a student besides Kuon and me.”
“I see.”

“Anyway, Kugito, got nothing to say?”
“Huh?”
I inquired ignorant, whereupon Kirisaki spread both her arms in her gym clothes.
“Look at me. It’s bloomers! Per school rules, we must wear this thing that’s already specified as a protected species in this school. What do you think about it!”
“Bloomers seem stuffy.”
“Unexpectedly, yes. Especially during the rainy season it’s— wait no. You think I wanted such an ordinary talk?”
“What do you want me to say?”
“There’s a lot to say! Like, are you the type to wear no bra under gym clothes? Or like, the sight of bloomers encroaching into the hips after a fierce workout are worthy to be one of Japan’s three most moe sights!”
I wanted to retort with what the other two were. But she likely would answer me normally, so I ignored it.
“Well, to be frank, I want to know if it arouses you.”
“That’s too frank. As if I would, idiot.”
“What? You don’t feel anything from a high school girl’s sweat-wet gym clothes… Are you okay?”
Don’t worry about me for real! It’s your head that isn’t okay!
“Or wait. Are you saying you can’t be satisfied unless you put your fingers into the crack of the encroached bloomers and fix it? To think you had such a fundamental, yet hardcore fetish…Fine. I’ll play out any situation for your desires. Incidentally, do you prefer the gym clothes tucked into the bloomers? Or leave them outside?”
“If you babble any more nonsense like that, I’ll forbid all stabbing at school.”
“N- Not fair!”
I got a headache… I made a big sigh and fanned my head with the paper in my hand.
“By the way, what’s written on there?”
“Huh? Oh, this?”
Remembering with Oh right, I opened the paper. I read the letters on it.
“….Mh.”
“What’s up?”
“Well—”
I shook my head.
“It was stupid.”
“Show me.”
I nodded and handed Kirisaki the paper. She read it out with a small voice.
“…’To Node Kugito. You’re getting cocky, so we’ll beat you up. If you got enough balls, kyam to the warehouse outside the city at four in the evening’. … What the? Kyam!?”
“Kyam probably means come…Listen and be surprised, apparently this is a so called letter of challenge.”
Kirisaki widened her eyes. “Wow” she shouted.
“L- Letter of challenge means the legendary ritual of one-sidedly calling out someone and picking a fight for no apparent reason, except the subjective ‘cocky’ or ‘cheeky’!?”
“Yep, that one. Truly a relict of the last century. A phantom that’s disappearing into the void brought forth by the mirage called the Showa Era.”
“Mhm… This is a surprise. Above all, they should just attack on their own if they’ve a problem with you. Do they think someone would voluntary come to the designed point to get a beating? The guys that sent you this might be surprisingly naïve.”
Raising her head, Kirisaki asked
“So, what’ll you do?”
“Obviously not going.”
I took the letter back and screwed it up.
“Ah, the valuable culture heritage.”
“So stupid.”
It probably were the guys from this morning. Like Kirisaki had said, they should just attack on their own if they had a problem with me. Why would I have to listen to their orders?

I stuffed the paper ball into my pocket, then cooled the handkerchief, as it had gotten lukewarm.
“What’re you going to do with that handkerchief?”
“Huh? Ah, this? Rin seems to have a heatstroke. I want to put it on her forehead.”
“…I see.”
“Yep. Got a problem with that?”
I asked so, whereas Kirisaki made a face with unusual mixed feelings and said.
“No… Not really.”
“I see.”
“Muh. Uhm… Get going to her.”
“Yeah.”
While tilting my head, I headed back to Rin.
…What a weird girl.

“I’m home.”
While saying so, I opened the front door and threw the keys on top of the shoe locker.
Declaring my home coming to the quiet deserted living room was a habit of mine. When I left my bag on top of the table and looked at the clock, it was just before half past five. Not even her regular work was over yet.
Reaching deep into the vinyl bag in might left hand, I opened the refrigerator. I put the ingredients I bought inside it. Chinese noodles, cucumber, ham, crab sticks, a pack of eggs… Today’s dinner was going to be chilling Chinese food, since it was the beginning of summer. For that occasion I wanted to add some pork filet too, but our household had a tight budget every month. Being excessive wasn’t good. We only had a feast when my sister got a bonus.
I wondered when I started to prepare dinner or lunchboxes like this for my sister that came home late. Even the house chores that I learned by imitation at first, I could now do perfectly. My sister was a policewoman that worked at the general security department of the Meitou police station, mainly in charge of juvenile crimes. Thus her schedule was irregular and while she technically had appointed work hours, she rarely managed to come home by it. Usually she worked until 9/10 o’clock in the night or even until midnight when some kind of big incident happened. She was exhausting herself at work every day to feed me, so I was really grateful. Though due to that, she apparently didn’t have a single boyfriend at her age. When I touched that issue, I merciless got an iron fist, as well as kick and sometimes an argentine backbreaker rack, so I kept silent, really silent.
When I finished packing away all the ingredients for dinner, I took out a pot with barley tea out in exchange. While pouring it into a cup, I sat down on a chair.
I gulped down the well-cooled tea at once. Fuah. I was living for this stuff. My sister urged me all the time to say that only after I found a job. But even students had times when they were tired and drinking something cool during heat made you say it. Seeking a comfort in your everyday life wasn’t just a privilege to adults.
While pouring me another cup, I suddenly remembered.
In the past, my sister put sugar into my barley tea, telling me it would taste better with that. It was when we both were still young. When I asked her where she knew that from, the answer was our mother. Regretfully the barley tea from back then wasn’t to my tastes and was hit by my sister for spouting it out right away. The reason I remembered that so vividly was that it was the first time my sister spoke out the word mother. Thinking back on it, I got the feeling that she had just spilled it carelessly back then and tried to avoid using it as much as possible.
After all, I didn’t have a single memory of “my mother”.
My mother died right after giving birth to me. I didn’t know why, nor did I ever ask. Neither would I probably do so from now on. Left behind were my sister, me and… our father.
Having lost his wife early, the temper of my father ran out immediately. He quit his job, drunk alcohol every day and soon started to show symptoms of an alcohol addiction, resorting to violence in the end. But not towards my sister. My father’s fist were all focused onto me.
At first, he restrained himself to just hitting me when he was annoyed. If I had been like any other kid, it might not have gone beyond that. But…
“…..”
I rolled up the hem of my uniform. The spot, where Kirisaki stabbed me today, had already healed. A crust had

formed, but it barely hurt anymore.
Yes— I was an ≪immortal boy≫.
Even if I was hit or kicked, by the next day it was completely healed. My father gradually became afraid of me. He started treating me like a monster and the abuse towards me escalated. Before long, my father came to believe that my mother died because she gave birth to a monster like me. In reality, that might have been correct. At this point, I didn't know anything.
For a child that wasn't even ten years old yet, it was incredible difficult to oppose the absolute existence that a parent was. As a matter of fact, I believed that I was punished for doing something bad, when my father drowned me in the bath, threw me into an open fire or strangled my neck. Faced with the blame on oneself like that, a little kid couldn't run away, but only strive for a mental self-defence.
My sister had always protected me. In the past, I once saw an album put away in the closet, so my sister properly inherited our mother's looks. That might be the reason our father never laid hands on my sister.
With time we grew up and at the same time my sister graduated from the police academy, she was assigned to the Meitou police station and left the house together with me and the little savings that remained. Luckily, the real estate agent, knowing our circumstances, rented out the house we're currently living in to us for a surprisingly cheap rent, so we managed to make it this far.
To be honest, our mother wasn't that big of an existence in my heart that my sister needed to be considerate about it. After all, I didn't even have any memories of her face. No, not just about our mother. My sister was working hard on various other fronts too.
At the beginning, when I got into middle school, I offered my sister that I would distribute newspapers or so to chip in for our expenses even a bit. However, my sister instantly turned it down. Her reason was this:
"There's astonishing more to learn in your 20s than your 10s. Not just studying. Fall in love, make mistakes, make friends, brawl, get hated and make up. All these things cultivate you and while you might consider them worthless now, you'll painfully realize later on how precious it was. So if you have time to work, go enjoy your youth to the fullest instead. You can dawdle along every day, just enjoy your student life as it is and it'll be best repayment for my troubles."
So I persistently insisted on doing the house chores at least, which resulted in her agreeing reluctant. That was the current duty assignment between my sister and me.
So every day, I cooked the food, washed the dishes, did the laundry, prepared the bath and went to school without missing a day even when I felt sluggish.
Though if I was asked about spending a fun student life, I would have to remain silent. How tanoshii (enjoyable) could I describe an everyday life as, where I was followed around and stabbed by a knife girl every day? Why did I use Japanese?
"…Geez."
When I was alone, I ended up thinking about a lot of stuff, stupid or not.
Wanting to watch some TV for a change of mood, I took the remote control. Just when I was about to switch it on, the phone rang. Calls at this time of the day were either advertisements, the mail order or a scam. While thinking that it wasn't anything decent either way, I stood up and headed for the ringing phone, then took the receiver.
"Hello, Node here."
"Assholeeeeee! Don't screw arouuuund!"
I pulled away my ear on the sudden yell. What, the Yakuza?
"I'm sure we didn't borrow any money."
"Say whaaat!? Don't play dumb, assholeee! Rrrwaaarr!"
What an incredible roll of the r. It seemed like his saliva would come through the phone.
"…Did you get the wrong number?"
"Wha! Eh? Seriously? …Ya're Node, right?"
"Yes."
"It's right after all, assholeee! You won't trick me so easily!"
He seemed to be rather stupid.
"Who the heck are you?"

Judging that manners were unneeded, I got a rude tone.
“It’s meeeeee!”
“Mr. Me? You from South America or what?”
“I told ya it’s meeeee!”
“Yeah, that kind of swindler. Just to tell you, I got no money for people that don’t name themselves.”
“I’m Yamagami, idioooot!”
Yamagami…. I plodded through my memories. It wasn’t there.
“Dun know you. Bye.”
“Wha! Hey, wait! Don’t hang up! Hold it!”
Before long there was a sound of a hand covering the receiver. But I could perfectly hear the background voices, though as mumbling.
“Hey, he said he doesn’t know my name!” “The bastard’s screwing with us!” “No wait, did ya give him your name back then?” “Ah, speaking of, I didn’t.” “Idiot, then how’s he supposed to know it!” “But I’m the only Yamagami in this area! I’m famous!” “Indeed. Then he’s at fault!” “Yeah, right!”
A moment of silence. Then, a screaming voice.
“It’s ya fault for not knowing iiiiitt!”
“Right. Everything’s my fault. My bad. Bye.”
“Hey! W- Wait! I didn’t get to the issue at hand yet!”
“Oh god, just spill it.”
“Ya got a letter today! Didn’t ya read it!?”
Now I finally understood. The ones that forced that stupid challenge letter I got during today’s P.E. onto Gotou…
Huh? Naitou? Mutou? Whatevertou, were them.
“…How do you guys know my home number?”
“Obviously we looked it up in the phonebooook!”
Uwah, so simple. When I pictured him browsing through the phonebook while holding the received, I felt like crying.
“Anyway, did’cha read the letter, huuh?”
“I did.”
“Then why ain’t you coming! We’ve been waiting the whole time, dude!!”
…They waiting under this blazing sun for longer than an hour? So righteous.
“Well, good job. I was in a bit of a pinch, you know.”
“Huh!? Pinch!?”
“You know, shopping for dinner.”
“Assholeeee! What’s more important, your damn dinner or my summons!?”
“Dinner.”
It didn’t even take a millisecond, my instant answer that is.
“Y- Ya- Ya bastard! Don’t mess with uuuss!”
“Shut up. Why do I have to follow your selfish summoning? Just wait there all your life, idiot. Let the sun turn your brain into butter, you trash. Melt into natural resources and be useful to earth, you scum.”
“S- Say what, asshole! Th- There’re things you can say and things you can’t!”
I got lectured by a delinquent.
“Aww, sure, sure. My bad for this morning. Sorry, okay. Peace again. Talking it out sure is nice.”
“We don’t need the fire department if a simple sorry could solve it!”
“Huh? You mean like extinguishing the heat of a fight?”
An advice from the background. “Yama-chan, it’s the police!” “Oh, right!”
“We don’t need the police, god damnit!”
An incredible statement when said out of context like this.
“Either way, I’m hanging up now. Good luck, on a lot of things. Work on your language.”
“Hey, wait, bastard! Don’t ya care about the girl!”
I had dealt with him half-heartedly, but on these words, I frowned.
“…Girl?”

As he thought that the tides finally changed in a favourable way for him, Yamagami (I think) restored his rough tone back to normal on my words.
“Heh, right. Node, it seems ya got a woman recently. Lucky bastard, really.”
“….What about the girl?”
I lowered my voice. But it didn’t have the same effect like this morning. The effect was reduced if it wasn’t done face-to-face.
“Listen well, Node. We got ya woman. If ya want her back, come to the warehouse now. Ya got 30 minutes. Be late and we can’t guarantee her well-being.”
“Hey, who’s the girl? Don’t tell me it’s—”
“Cya!”
“Hey, wait!”
Now it was my turn to stop him. But the delinquent Yamgami ended the call right away. Damn you.
“A girl—”
Speaking of a girl that hang around me lately and was likely to get caught by them… Rin?
“Damn.”
I clicked my tongue. That was why I said nothing good would come out of being around someone like me. I regretted parting with Rin at school, since she said she would go clean the park.
“…No use crying over spilled milk now.”
I strongly hit the nearby wall and started running.
I could only head there for now.

Originally this place was a warehouse for the materials that weren’t needed at the nearby factory anymore. But now the factory itself shut down due to recession. As there was no interested party for it, the place was abandoned and turned into a meeting spot for the local delinquents and hoodlums. I too was suddenly approached in numbers, abducted and dragged to this place a couple of times when I walked around. As deserted as it was, it probably was the perfect spot for doing that.
I entered the dusty and musty building. No sounds, but only an eerie silence awaited me.
“Hey, I’m here. Where’re you?”
My voice echoed. But there was no answer. With no other choice, I started to walk on.
“First they call me out here, then they ignore me…”
In the warehouse, where I couldn’t see anyone, was stuff like rusted iron poles, broken shovels, boxes with screws whose purpose I didn’t know, and bags with sand, piled up here and there.
I curiously looked around in all directions, but there was no presence of anyone. For a moment I thought I was tricked, but if they were that clever, they wouldn’t give me such a cheap threat and challenge letter.
Suddenly I got the feeling that I saw a silhouette moving besides the piled up cardboards.
I shifted my gaze there.
“…Someone there?”
It happened right after I said that. Suddenly a shock run over my head.
“…!”
I inadvertently fell forward, but absorbed it by doing a step forward.
“Wha—”
The moment I turned around, a clump of steel pipes attacked me from all four sides.
“Uwah!”
I was knocked down at once. The guys attacked me one after another while I still lay on the ground. My body was merciless hit with all kinds of weapons. I would be lying if I said it didn’t hurt, but well, it wasn’t unbearable. I used my usual tactic (?) and stayed still, waiting for them to get tired. And like expected, the beating ended before even ten minutes passed. I gasped for breath.
“A- After all this, he…”
“Well, a normal guy would lose consciousness or at least be so gravely injured that he couldn’t move anymore.”
Saying so, I calmly stood up.

“Owah!”
“It’s really Node! The ≪invincible Wolf≫!”
Don’t give me a weird nickname.
“…Geez, you really let loose.”
I cracked my and looked at the hoodlums surrounding me.
“So, that’s all? You were lying on the pone? Just for a surprise attack on me?”
“N- No!”
One in a group of 4 or 5 people said.
“Guess this much won’t get ya after all, Node!”
A voice from above my head. I inadvertently looked up. On top of the iron poles that were piled up like a pyramid, was an idiot. Squatting down with his legs wide spread, the so called “Taking a dump position”, he desperately tried to show off. He faced me while shouldering a squared timber.
“That’s how it gotta be! For our festival now!”
“You’re… Yamagami?”
“Exactly!”
“You issued the letter of challenge.”
“Yep!”
“Hey, why a letter of challenge?”
“Huh? Wat’cha mean?”
“A letter in this age? It’s the age of e-mails now.”
“I, I can’t stand them! Besides I don’t even know ya address, dude!”
“I don’t mind telling you my cell phone’s. It’s kugi@…”
Inadvertently Yamagami took out his cell phone from his pocket and tried to input it. But he hastily raised his head as she noticed something.
“Sc- Screw this, ‘diot!”
“Really? Well, I don’t want to be mail friends with you either.”
“Enough of ya bullshit! I’ll fucking kill ya!!”
“…Just try.”
Full unfolding of my characteristic. An intimidating voice cold as ice and a glare that would even daunt a hawk. Like expected, Yamagami flinched.
“D… Don’t make such a scary face, dude!”
“Way to go for a threat.”
“This morning I was scared by it’s power, but it’s different now. Don’cha care what happens to ya woman!?”
“I hope she’s really here.”
“Of course. We kidnapped her on the way home today. Keh, this happens when ya leave ya woman alone, dude.”
Yamagami raised a vulgar laugh, then called out to the guys below with “Bring her!”. To my surprise, he apparently was high-ranked amongst the delinquents and it were his lackeys that attacked me. Proof for that was that the nearby guys disappeared with a loud reply.
“Listen Node, listen real good. We’ll beat ya up now. But ya ain’t allowed to move a finger.”
…So far I never had moved a finger in a fight, though. However it would seem like obeyed his order, which didn’t sit right with me.
“And if I say no?”
Yamigami sneered.
“Then this happens to the woman.”
He mimicked cutting open his throat with his finger.
“…Seriously?”
“Yeah, seriously.”
Saying so, Yamagami pulled out a big knife out of his pocket. …Damn. I didn’t think they would go as far as killing her, but hurting her was more than likely. I had called Kirisaki to have her jump in from behind on an opening and defeat them, but today of all days I got her answering machine. So useless. If she didn’t utilize her unparalleled

physical abilities here, then when?
“…But have you really caught my (to be precise she isn’t, but I’ll leave it as that for now) woman?”
“Ya doubt us?”
“Sorry, but you hit me.”
On my words, Yamagami nodded with “Well, yeah”. Getting off the pyramid, he stood before me.
“Fine, I’ll bring her here. Hey, get the woman! Bring her here!”
On his outcall, one of the lackeys answered loud. Then a certain girl appeared from the shadows of the building while being restrained from behind.
“No!”
A shrill scream raised. Yamagami said “Behave!” and pulled the female student closer, then grabbed her hands from behind and put the knife at her throat.
“Okay, Node, now ya know we ain’t lying!”
“Kyaa! Help me!”
“……!”
The female student sought help. That behavior was lovely and if I had to compare it to something, it would be from a princess captured by a bandit. Seeing it, I
“…”
I… ehm, I
“…”
….
“……Huh?”
I leaked a stupid voice.
“Please! Save me, Node-san!”
From hearing that voice it was pretty obvious, but the hostage wasn’t Rin.
Acquainted with me, a girl and not Rin. That only left one person.
“I’m, scared!”
“Bitch, behave!”
In other words, well, uhm, the female student in front of my eyes was—
“…What’s up with this farce?”

—None other than the killing devil with a knife, Kirisaki Kyouko.

…Like that, the flashback and my escapism ended.
Now then, what do to about this situation?
“’Sup Node! Can’t speak from the shock?”
Yes, quite so.
“Listen, move only one step from there and ya woman will suffer!”
…I thought that wouldn’t be all too bad, though. In her case.
“Node-san… I…!”
Kirisaki apparently kept up her acting of a lady completely unrelated to violence and put on artificial coquettish airs, spilling faint tears. Amazing in one more way.
“Hehe, such a cutie. Such a waste on ya.”
If you like, I’ll give her to you. Right now I’ll put a salad dressing on top of it.
“Hey, say something!”
“Something.”
“Huh!?”
“…No, sorry. Just a reflex, since I’m just so surprised.”
I scratched my head. Crossing my arms, I sighed lightly.
“So? I can’t move a step from here?”
“Yeah!”
“…I see.”

Still, what was she up to? …Well, it probably was for some reason like it's fun or something.
"Hey, ya ain't got time for thinking. Look, while ya hesitant, it's getting worse for her."
while saying so, Yamagami lowered his hand with the knife and felt up Kirisaki's body. With "No, Stop! Don't touch me!" Kirisaki resisted. She was obviously enjoying this.
"…Hee, nice body ya got there."
Touching her breasts crudely, Yamagami started to fondle them merciless like that. As he got excited, his breathing became rough.
After a while, his finger loosened one button, then another. The underwear peeked through the gap. Getting on a roll, Yamagami used his free left hand to touch her bottom tenacious. Kirisaki twisted her body, but couldn't do any dauntless movements since she was restraint. Yamagami seemed to get even more excited by her resistance and then smoothly lifted up her skirt bit by bit to harass her. Her white thighs gradually became exposed. Fortunately it wasn't the site with the knife on it, but
"St.. Stop…"
I couldn't overlook how one of Kirisaki's twitched, even though she continued her resistance weakly with that. Yeah, she was quite pissed.
However, Yamagami had not the slightest clue of that and his rustic hand was about to sneak into her partly visible underwear—
"…You better stop now."
I advised him rather serious. I wouldn't be responsible what happened afterwards.
"Then fucking say that ya ain't going to lift a finger. Also, stop meddling when we prey at ya school."
"To begin with, I don't remember ever interfering with you guys."
"What was that this morning then!?"
"Well, that… was my acquaintance."
"I dun give a fuck! Just obey my order!"
"…So it goes like this? If I don't want that girl to get injured, I have to turn a blind eye to when you extort money or hit students, be it acquaintances of mine or not?"
"Right!"
"Mhm."
I looked down in thought and groaned short. After I stayed like that for a moment, I raised both my hands along with my head.
"Fine."
"…Seriously?"
"Yeah. Do what you want."
Yamagami made a joyful look.
"Heh, ya should've been so honest from the beginning. —Hey, guys, get him!"
On this instruction, the waiting delinquents raised a war cry. With weapons in their hands, they started to move. But,
"Hey, don't get me wrong."
"Huh?
"I said, do what you want"
I said coldly and uncaring.
"—with that girl."
"….Eh?"
Silence filled the place. The guys that were about to attack me all stopped moving with mouth agape stunned.
"Wha… Eh, huh?"
"Even if I try to play prudent, I can't do so completely."
I lowered my hands, then shrugged my shoulders.
"Strangers don't matter to me and I couldn't care less if they get extorted, hit or tied to the school gate naked. But when an acquaintance of mine suffers that, I get sick. It's not about a chivalrous spirit or a sense of justice. It disgusts me on a personal note. I probably will go crazy, if you guys lay hands on my acquaintance."
I said.

“Thus, I can’t keep that promise. Therefore, do what you want with that girl.”
“Y— Ya serious!?”
“What do you expect me to do? I can’t promise what I can’t keep.”
“No way… Node-san… I…!”
“Sorry, Kirisaki.”
Putting my hands together, I lowered my head towards Kirisaki.
“You were unlucky to get involved with me. Be prepared.”
“Y- Ya such a brute!”
His lackeys agreed to Yamagami’s words.
“H- He got no heart!”
“A devil after all… All the rumours were true!”
“Shit… He’s truly dangerous. Not from this planet.”
“He readily abandon his own woman… What hell has he been through?”
…I got the feeling they added more unnecessary exaggerations, but it couldn’t be helped here.
“C’mon, do your thing already. Though I don’t want to see that, so can I leave now? I have to make dinner.”
“Node-san…! Please, save me…!”
“Haha, sorry, not possible.”
I answered really invigorating.
“Well then my friends, have fun.”
“B- Bastard, wait!”
I raised my hand and turned on my heel.
Good grief, I felt like was dragged onto a stupid interlude. It actually took quite the time to make Chinese Tare sauce.
“W- We’re really gonna do it! Ya fine with that? She’ll get it!”
“I said it’s fine.”
“Worry! Grieve! Falter what to doooo!”
Just turning my head around, I shook my hand lightly.
“Sorry, but I only live for the future.”
“What are ya acting cool foooor!”
Yamagami’s scream, similar to grief, resounded in the abandoned warehouse.
I walked away unconcerned.
“Node-san, Node-san…!”
Her unchanged disgusting acted voice came after me, but I ignored it.
“Node… -san…”
Before long, the voice became quieter, as she had given up.
“Your boyfriend… is so cruel.”
Yamagami said so somewhat sympathizing.
“…..”
“Hey, what’s up?”
Anyway, I didn’t know what she was up to, but I took a pass on being played around by her more than necessary. I was already sacrificing a lot of things anyway, so if even my private time got… At that time.
Suddenly,
“…!”
A chill ran down my back. It was an eerie sensation like being brushed with the tip of a sickle.
I inadvertently stopped. At the same time, there was a dull sound and Yamagami’s muttered “Guah” voice.
Something fell down with a flop behind me. The footsteps of the lackeys rushing over with “Y- Yama-chan!”.
“…What’s going on, Kugito?”
The somewhat stiff voice stimulated the back of my head. Even while I got nothing but a bad feeling, I slowly turned around.
In front there was Yamagami laying on the ground and holding his crotch. Unable to respond to his worried lackeys next to him, he wide-eyed foamed at the mouth and was repeating incoherent muttering with “Ag, Aggg”.

Inadvertently I felt sorry for him. No, that didn't matter now.
Next to the guy in pain was—
"Your girlfriend is held hostage, yet you tell them to do what they want…?"
Kirisaki, clad in some kind of evil aura for sure. Were this a manga, I would say "Wh- What an enormous aura…! To think that I'm overwhelmed!".
The shocking truth.
The captured princess was the in all respects feared Demon Queen.
"No… Well, Kirisaki…-san?"
I inadvertently added a honorific.
"…Sure, I'm to blame for annoying you. I totally apologize for that."
"I, I see…"
"But."
Kirisaki said austere while emitting a pure black aura with the name killing intent.
"I also find it hard to forgive that you seriously were going to abandon me…"
"No… I just thought, since it's you, you could somehow manage…"
"Even if that's so, did you've to do it so readily?"
"M- My bad…"
"Your bad?"
Repeating like parrot, Kirisaki mumbled.
"I see. For a woman that's even less worth than dinner, just saying my bad is enough, huh."
Damn… I had never seen her this angry during the few months since I met her.
"Th- That's not really it…"
"Then what?"
"Well, you see—"
At that moment, a lackey of Yamagami attacked Kirisaki with a metal bat.
"Ya bitch! How dare ya do that to Yama-chan!"
He swung the highly raised weapon straight down on her body. I opened my mouth to warn her, but Kirisaki gave him a glance with her almond eyes,
"Shut up, you trash."
then quickly lowered her posture, only to make one step forward and push out her lightly drawn back arm straight in the next moment.
"Ugh!"
With a dull DON sound, Kirisaki sunk her palm into the stomach of her opponent. It was an attacked called the carpus blow, where the fingers were a bit bended. Swiftly pulling her hand away, she raised her knee with all her might towards the stomach of the collapsing opponent. On the second impact, no longer able to raise a scream, the opponent wordlessly dropped onto the ground.
The other delinquents that hadn't moved like they were fascinated by that magnificence sequence, hastily surrounded Kirisaki. The princess, who only waited for the help of her knight earlier, suddenly turned into a martial artist, so the delinquents apparently still hadn't fully grasped the situation. Even while they stayed alerted, they couldn't hide their perplexed expressions.
Kirisaki gave them a side-glance while still glaring at me and made a light sigh.
"Such a pain… All of you, come at me."
"Wh- What's up with you bitch!"
"I'm saying I'm sick of this. I'm not talking any more with low-lives who used female hostages for negotiations."
The delinquents looked at each other on this remark and nodded, as they didn't know what was going on, but at least realized that they were being mocked.
And then,
"Dun mess with uuuss!"

Each spitting similar words, they moved all at once.
Even so, Kirisaki kept facing me.
And at the same time the attacks were launched at her, she made no move to defend or dodge and just stood there.
“Hey, Kirisaki—”
It happened just before the tips of the various weapons reached her head. She squatted down, then retreated backwards flicking. The weapons from the guys in front cut throw empty space. When she was about to fall, she put her hands on the ground and using that as an axis, she gave on of the guys in the back a low roundhouse kick. Standing up towards the falling over guy, she grabbed his arm and moved behind his back.
“Don’t worry. You’ll only unable to move for a while.”
As soon as she said so, an abnormal CRACK noise sounded that I didn’t want to hear. The guy screamed. I could tell right away that his shoulder was broken. With a light touch, he easily fell onto the ground and wriggled like a dying cockroach.
The other guys had stopped moving for now, but one of them came at her again with a squared timber, as he at least had a fighting spirit left. Like that, he struck at Kirisaki without any hesitation. Just like the fact that she was a girl had already skipped his mind. Kirisaki reached out her hand and before the squared timber touched her skin, she repelled it to the side. Well, brushed it aside might be more correct. Screwed up, it would have been a grave injury. From that momentum, the opponent inclined forward into her bosom and he received a hardened fist at the same time. This time it was a punch. A muttering voice. Another one knocked out. An attack from behind. Turning around like that, her long white leg reached out from her flattering skirt. Her heel strongly hit a chin. A strong impact to the chin caused a cerebral concussion. The opponent staggered, then collapsed backwards along with his friends. Next she avoided an attack from the right with a light step. At the same time, her two pushed out fingers pierced the opponent eyes. He crouched down, only able to hold his face. She straightforward lowered her raised heel onto his head.
“Wraaaaar!”
A delinquent rushed at her straight with a beast-like howl. Most of must have been backbone. Kirisaki calmly took a stance and waiting for the approaching opponent, she spit out saliva from her mouth. It perfectly hit his eyeball. Using the opening created from the disturbance of the suddenly clogged vision, she launched her hand straight like a sword. It bore into his throat and an incomprehensible “Bgh!” voice came out. After that, he bend down doing by coughing fiercely, yet she rammed her knee into his face again. Of course the guy fainted.
“D- Damn!”
As they felt in danger since their numbers gradually reduced, one guy finally pulled out a knife from his pocket. Normally that would have been dangerous, but— since their opponent Kirisaki, I could only call it misfortune. Dodging the thrust knife with a small back step at the same time it approached from the side, Kirisaki saw it’s full swing, then stepped in towards him without hesitation. Grabbing the guy’s wrist from right above, she easily twisted it like that. The guy spilled a cry of pain and Kirisaki picked up the unexpected useless knife, looking down on it and mumbling.
“The blade isn’t sharpened properly. Just like you bought it, I guess. The material isn’t good either. With this, you can only inflict scratches.”
At the same time she threw it onto the ground, she said to the guy, who still hadn’t recovered.
“Don’t carry a knife, if you don’t know how to handle it.”
Like that, she rammed her elbow into his muzzle with attitude. Tragically, he was knocked out.
All of her attacks were without waste. Kirisaki’s strength that you wouldn’t expect from her small figure and her physical abilities were one thing, but her movements were just too refined. Like she was well-informed about how to break a body. Most of the guys were defeated with one strike.
Before I noticed, there was only one left, all the others collapsed on the ground. Even the last one didn’t look like he

was still up for a fight. A group certainly had a great power, but when you toppled it one-by-one it wasn't a big deal. As proof for that, the guy technically still stood on his legs, but was trembling pathetically. Kirisaki approached him, then grabbed him at his collar and said.
"Tell the other trash you hang out with: Don't ever meddle with our students from now on. If you ever do…"
She showed a scornful smile that couldn't be have any more scorn.
"Then I'll personally visit you."
"…."
"Got it? —If so, reply!"
"Y- Yees!"
Kirisaki grunted and thrust the guy away. The delinquent landed on his butt, then hastily got up and escaped like that.
"Not even helping his friends, huh. Their bond was this shallow after all."
Saying so, Kirisaki looked at me.
"…Now then."
D- Damn. I should have fled while she was fighting. I was such an idiot.
"…What?"
"You'll let me hear a reason I can agree with, right? Like you had some kind of plan."
"No, not really anything of the likes."
"Were you waiting for an opening by pretending to leave?"
"I normally wanted to go home and eat dinner."
"……"
"……"
"……"
"Wh- What, it's my fault!?"
Feeling that the situation was getting unfavourable to me, I decided to go on the counteroffensive.
"Above all, it's your fault for getting caught by them!"
"I apologize for that. But right now I'm asking why you treated me like a stray cat caught in the neighbourhood."
"No, I would help a cat. Or it would give me nightmares."
"…Are you saying you can sleep soundly if it's just me?"
Damn, I made a verbal slip. No, I wasn't at fault. I shouldn't be. Besides,
"What's the big deal anyway. It turned out alright in the end!"
"That's nothing but hindsight-based. I'm your girlfriend, you know."
"…Now listen,"
I made a big sigh and said.
"You go on about girlfriend, girlfriend, but it's just 'for show'."
"What?"
"You told me that I can fall in love with someone. That you just want to stay by my side."
"I… did say that."
"Then don't play the girlfriend!"
Kirisaki widened her eyes on my words.
"Sure, I said I would go out with you. But you see, only within the limits of my agreement. I never said you could cause me unnecessary trouble. Dragging me into your zest and then getting angry like this time is just too selfish of you, isn't it?"
"…"
Kirisaki didn't answer my question and just looked down.
"…C'mon, don't fall silent. Was I wrong?"
"No… you weren't."
She mumbled quietly.
"But… It wasn't for zest."
"Huh?"

“You’re— always concerned about Kuon Rin.”
I was surprised about the sudden topic change to Rin.
“…Where did that come from?”
“You behave like you don’t care about others, but you treat just Kuon Rin special.”
“Special… Well, compared to others, yeah.”
Though I just simply couldn’t leave her be. But what about it?
“I think that’s understandable. She’s a side to her that won’t let you take your eyes off her. Of course you get worried, kind as you are. …But.”
“But?”
“It sure was hot today during P.E.”
“Huh? Yeah, right.”
“I went to the water fountain.”
“Yeah.”
“I said I got injured, but actually the sun got to me a bit. So I took shelter in the shadow.”
“Oh, is that so.”
Sure, it was rather hot these days.
“And?”
“…”
“What?”
“Well… In other words”
She raised her head a bit. For some reason, her cheeks were a bit red.
“Ehm—”
“Oh c’mon.”
I got somewhat irritated, so I said.
“If you got something to say, say it clearly. You’re such a pain.”
“—”
Kirisaki was taken aback, as she received a shock from these words. Like that, she dropped her shoulders and trembled all over.
“Wh- What…?”
“…S- Sorry”
Facing me front up, Kirisaki shouted.
“Sorry for being such a pain!”
Then she ran straight ahead. In her run, she flipped her skirt and pulled out her knife, stabbing my stomach with all her might.
“Ugh!”
Then she resolute inserted her fingers into the wound and churned it. GYAAA! It hurts, it hurts, it hurts! It hurt me like any other!
Kirisaki pulled out her knife, shook off the blood and turned on her heel.
“Stupid Kugito! Wannabe delinquent! Virgin! You’re tiny! And have phimosis!”
“H- Hey wait, you don’t even have proof for the last two!”
Not even paying attention to my call to stop her, she ran away like that.
“….What was that.”
I was left behind alone.
“I don’t get her.”
Mumbling, I wearily looked down on my body. Usually she stripped off my uniform before stabbing me, so it wouldn’t leave a mark, but this time she perfectly did it through it. What was she thinking?
“…I’ll go home too.”
Nothing would come out of pondering. It wasn’t like her weird behaviour started today. I passed the heaps of corpses of delinquents and proceeded on my way home.
…But— Suddenly an out of place sound reached my hear.

A dry sound like two kind of soft things were hitting each other.
“Huh…?”
When I thought so, a small silhouette appeared from behind the mountain of cardboards. I widened my eyes.
It was a woman. No, it might be better to say girl. By her appearance she looked like a middle schooler or at worst a grade schooler.
Her short hair, combined with the loose suit unsuitable for her body, encouraged her young aura even more.
But— You couldn’t say that only for her face. Well, it had it’s childish traits, but— it was perfectly missing the characteristic innocence of children.
To use a simile, a French doll. It was delicate, but lacked emotions and even if there would have been any, she surely wouldn’t have a soul— That was how I perceived her.
But I wasn’t surprised about the looks of the inhuman girl.
This woman— I knew her.
“It has been a while.”
Pretty much as she was practicing her lines for a play.
“Ever since—”
With a monotone voice like indifferently reading from a script at best— she said.
“we met due to the ≪Midnight killing Devil≫ incident a few months ago… I take it.”

Darkness was befalling the place. The period between noon and night, called dusk.
At the deserted and abandoned building I confronted a woman, whose name I didn’t even know.
But even though I didn’t know her name, I had met her before. A few month ago— Yes, right after the real solution of the ≪Midnight killing Devil≫ incident, she appeared before Kirisaki and me. She minutely knew about me of course, but also about Kirisaki’s personality. Naturally, that she was the ≪Midnight killing Devil≫ too.
Obeying the demand of following her if we didn’t want Kirisaki’s real identify exposed, she took us to a place, where we heard something unbelievable. It went like this:
This country had a secret.
Those who break the laws receive just punishment at a legal place— That was a system established long ago not only in Japan, but all over the world.
Criminals got a penalty. A suitable suffering for those that had strayed from humanity.
It can be said that this is an obvious construction for a reasonable society.
However, in the twisted present-day, it didn’t necessarily apply to every human.
There were people trying to evade the laws by using their privileges to preserve the high standing they had gained.
There were people living as nothing had happened while insatiably lusting for privileges and plunging a great number of people into darkness.
Laws aren’t absolute. They’re created by humans, so they naturally have loopholes.
So there certainly existed a way in this world to slip through these holes and dodge the deserved punishment.
However— This country wasn’t that rotten yet to keep pardon these guys.
The government created a group to bestow heaven’s punishment on these evils that couldn’t be judged by the law.
It had no name. Because their activities itself were straying from the law, it’s secret was kept strictly confidential.
≪They≫ were simply called the ≪Organisation≫.
The ≪Organisation≫ gathered criminals with outstanding physical ability behind closed doors. In exchange for dropping the charges against them, they were assigned a role as executor.
With the goal of fighting evil with evil.
Probably, most humans would laugh with “quite the conventionally setting” after hearing that. “It’s been done various times in the past, nothing original. So, what kind of movie is it?”.
No. I would answer so while shaking my head.
It was about reality.
The government was running an organisation that gathered criminals to punish those that couldn’t be judged by the laws.
The man I met, the boss of the ≪organisation≫, spoke about that quite seriously.

And he told Kirisaki. That instead of getting judged by the law as a murderer, she has to become the ≪organisation's≫ pawn and kill evils that escaped punishment for all kind of reasons or circumstances. An unbelievable story. That was all I could say about it. However, after a manifold process, Kirisaki accepted it. She was partly threatened to do so, but she surely chose a way to live and atone for her sins. With some complications, I decided to stay with Kirisaki. From the beginning to the end.
And this woman was Kirisaki's channel to the ≪organisation≫— A messenger. When we met before, we didn't even have anything that you would call a normal conversation, so this might be the first time we substantial exchanged proper words.
She looked into the direction to where Kirisaki disappeared and mumbled isolated.
"That is youth for you."
"Huh?"
"I remember that a lover's quarrel is something like a rite of passage for couples that have dated for a certain period of time."
"You're not wrong, but I think you're not right either."
"Is it fun?"
"Huh?"
"Are you enjoying your school life with Kirisaki Kyouko?"
"I'm surprised you ask that after you saw this."
"From an objectively analysis, there seem to be various enjoyments. The expressions she makes are an perfect example of a girl her age."
"Your point?"
"Like I said, that is youth for you."
"Sorry, I'm not smart enough for that. If it's sarcasm, can you say it more straight?"
"In front of you, she seems be rather 'normal'. Taking her background into account, that might be understandable."
When she returned her gaze to me, the woman said.
"Due to the fact that relieving her sexual desire requires her to kill, you might be the first person in her life that she can reveal her true self to, since you will not be disgusted, hate or push her away for getting stabbed, let alone die from it."
"What about it?"
"In other words, in front of you, she returns to being a simple high school girl. At least outward-wise, leaving her inner conflict aside."

…Not knowing what she wanted to tell me, I frowned.
"Then what about you?"
"Me?"
"How do you perceive her? As a normal high school girl? Or— As the hideous ≪Midnight killing Devil≫ that kept killing numerous people for irrational reasons?"
"Well…"
I hesitated to give an instant answer. Because both was correct. Ever since I started dating Kirisaki, I came to know about her human side that showed up from time to time and above all the burden she carried, even while I understood that she was an inexcusable murderer, which left me unable to think about everything ethical.
"Actually, more importantly, what're you doing here?"
"I believe it is slightly cowardly to change the topic of the discussing only because you do not want to answer, but— well, that aside for now. I have no special reason for coming to see you."
"You don't!?"
I said disappointed.

“I thought— it was another order from the ≪organisation≫.”
“Not as of now. There are other members besides you two after all.”
“Well, glad to hear.”
“But one will definitely come in the near future. Please be prepared.”
“Wouldn’t it be better to tell her that instead of me?”
“No, it was special for you.”
“…What do you mean?”
“Please think about it yourself.”
“I’m not good at dealing with difficult stuff.”
“When you relinquish your thinking because of that, you will turn into a mere useless carbon life form that only consumes oxygen and emits carbon dioxide.”
…She sure didn’t hold back.
“Well, for now that is still acceptable, though. It does not particularly trouble me.”
“Then don’t bring it up.”
“I believed that unless someone pointed it out for you, you would not notice it before fully understanding it. I am saying this out of kindness.”
Grr… It was a sound argument and I was partly aware of it myself, so I couldn’t say anything back.
“…How can you tell? We haven’t talked with each other enough for that.”
“It is because you, personality-wise, do not see the necessity to analyse details.”
“Huh? What?”
“You are easy to read, because you are a simple idiot.”
I inadvertently raised my fist.
“That you immediately tend to resort to violence like that, proves my theory.”
She told me so with an impassive face, whereas I lowered my shaking hand. Damn.
“I pray that this mindset of yours will not get you in troubles one day.”
“Duh, thanks.”
“Well then, excuse me now.”
In the end, what did she actually come here for? …Maybe she wanted to show me that we were under strict surveillance?
“Geez, how nasty…”
While thinking so, I suddenly remembered that she too was a woman at large.
“Hey.”
“Yes?”
When I called her to a stop on her leave, the woman turned around.
“If you say everything earlier, then do you know… why Kirisaki acted like that?”
“By like that you mean?”
“Well, you know, getting caught on purpose by these guys on the floor. She said it wasn’t for zest, got angry out of nowhere and stabbed me.”
“…”
The woman stared at me.
“What?”
“There is a hint veiled in the words I told you earlier.”
“….?” I tried to recall it. But, I didn’t get it.
“…I don’t get it. Tell me.”
“Chromosome-wise I too belong to the female gender, so I do comprehend her actions. However, I am not such a fool to tell you it without any hesitation.”
“What the. Oh c’mon.”
“Generally speaking, it is ‘tactless’. You would do better to realize this on your own.”
Grr. It was annoying how each of her sentence was so roundabout.
“How about you make an effort? If it is true that you decided to stay by her side.”

Saying so, the woman cast down her eyes a bit and mumbled isolated.
“…Though as someone who knows the human called Kirisaki Kyouko, I do not know if doing so will have an effect on her.”
I raised one eyebrow and tilted my head, taking a pose to inquire about the meaning, but there was no sign of an answer.
“Is that all? Then I will excuse myself now.”
“Y- Yeah, right. Okay.” To begin with, she came here on her own.
“Until then.”
“…Ah, right.”
“What?”
“What’s your name?”
“…I do not think there is a need for you to know.”
“Well, yeah, but you see… You act as a broker between the ≪organisation≫ and us from now on, right? Then it’s better to know at least your name. It would be bad to just use ‘Hey’. It’s not like we’re old married couple.”
“It proves no problem when we are taking for an old married couple.”
“For me it does!”
“Is that so. How troublesome.”
The woman showed a thinking behaviour for a while, but said before long.
“I understand. It is Kaousonemiya Haruka.”
“Huh?”
“Like I said, Kaousonemiya Haruka.”
“…Well, that’s an impressive name. Titled?”
“I have a lineage, but do not know it detailed.”
“I see…” Still, it was frigging hard to speak out.
“When it is too long for you, I do not mind it when you call me Haru-chan.”
“That’s okay!? Specially from your side?”
“I am called like that at the ≪organisation≫.”
…What was that geezer thinking? No, he surely wasn’t thinking anything at all. It was on the fly. Yeah, sure. No doubt.
“…’kay, Haru then.”
“You omitted the chan, I see.”
“I omitted the chan.”
“I understand. Well then, I take this was all.”
“Y- Yeah.”
“Excuse me.”
The woman, nah, Kaousonemiya Haruka… correction, Haru said so and lowered her head a bit, then turned on her heels and left.
…I totally didn’t get her.
Amidst the heat that didn’t show any signs of going down even at night, I was left behind alone.

Chapter 02: The immortal Boy and worrisome everyday Life

The next day.
I naturally looked for Kirisaki after entering the classroom. When I noticed my behaviour, I shook my head wearily.
Why should I have to concern myself over her?
Not like I cared about what kind of reaction she would give me.
I tossed my bag on top of my desk while sighing. With the new seating arrangement, I luckily secured a seat by the window. Everyone else had drawn lots for it, but only mine was directly assigned to me by our homeroom teacher. It might have just been done to keep a troublemaker out of sight. Anyway, my passion for studying didn’t go as far as to hog a front seat, so I gladly accepted it.
However, the problem was that Kirisaki sat next to me.

She wasn't here today, though. Feeling somewhat relieved, I sat down while asking myself why I felt relieved.
The classroom was noisy and somewhat restless before the start of homeroom. But I just looked space-out at the stupid scribbling on the blackboard, whereupon the ruckus suddenly settled down.
Kirisaki had appeared in the entrance.
For the time being, Kirisaki Kyouko was currently the most popular girl in class (amongst boys and girls). During her sham, she was creepily sociable, well-mannered and acted polite towards anyone. Moreover, her features were above average, so her popularity wasn't all that unreasonable. You would think a few people would get jealous, but fortunately, no one tried to do anything suspicious so far. The main reason for it might be that her boyfriend was me.
"Good morning."
Calling out to them like that, everyone naturally replied with the same words. A lot of them even said it before her.
While Kirisaki replied to every single one of them, she reached my desk.
"Good morning, Node-san."
"…Yo."
As always, it was a polite greeting that gave me the shivers.
"Today we have such wonderful weather again."
"It's damn hot, though."
"And how is that a problem? It makes you feel that summer has come."
It was a common exchange— Or so it should have been, but it felt kind of superficial. Just my imagination?
"Then excuse me now."
Saying so, Kirisaki sat down next to me. She took out the textbooks from her bag and started to get ready for the first period.
"Hey, Kirisaki."
"Yes?"
"Why did you snap out of the blue yesterday?"
Her hands stopped. She turned around to me with an unnatural bright smile.
"What are you talking about?"
Like that, she played dumb. I brought my face closer and whispered quietly.
"You know, yesterday. After you beat the shit out of these guys."
"I have no idea what you are talking about."
"…What's wrong with you?"
"Right back at you, Node-san. Why are you insisting on such things? We each had things to do yesterday, so we parted at the school gate, remember? Afterwards we did not talk to each other, much less see each other."
It seemed like she wasn't feigning ignorance, but seriously tried to make yesterday's happening "non-existent".
"…Fine, whatever. Later, when you left, Haru… that woman from the 《organisation》 we met before, came by."
"If you will excuse me, Node-san, I have to take care of some things."
She stood up in the middle of our conversation and swiftly went away. Apparently she was on day-duty. She left the classroom with the dust cloth to wipe the blackboard before class starts.
"What's with her…"
Her attitude was rather strange. Kind of barefaced. She was avoiding me on purpose. Why would she have to do that?
While I was full of confusion, Rin came in, crossing path with Kirisaki. She must have finished her usual morning cleaning before class. Looking over her back and tilting her head, she came over to me. Rin's seat was diagonally in front of mine.
"Yo."
"Yeah, morning. Say, Kugi-chan, did something happen?"
"Something? Nah."
"Really? But Kirisaki-san looked angry."
Huh? I squinted.
"She's angry? Why?"
"Don't ask me… Did you two had a quarrel again?"

I was at a loss for words upon hearing the word “again”.
Previously, during the 《Midnight Killing Devil》 incident, Kirisaki and I had a difference in opinions. No, it wasn’t something that simple— Anyway, it had been Rin, who pushed my back then when I was puzzled about what to do.
“Not really… Or at least I think so.”
“Kirisaki-san wouldn’t get angry for no reason.”
“Actually, she was really angry? It didn’t look like that, though.”
“Mhm. I could somewhat tell by her aura. If I was wrong, all the better…”
Rin placed down her bag and sat down in her chair.
“I don’t think she would get angry over something that offends a normal girl… So it must have been something grave.”
“Something grave, huh…”
I put one elbow on the desk, rested my head on my hand and distantly lost myself in thought. …Mhm, if I had to name something, there was only the thing from yesterday.
“Ah, you have a clue.”
“Well, but that wasn’t anything to get angry about…”
“That’s not for you to decide, Kugi-chan. After all, people tend to overlook things, come to misunderstandings or end up committing terrible mistakes at unexpected occurrences.”
“Is that so?”
“Yeah. Well, it’s my mother’s teaching, though.”
Mhmm. I mumbled consensual and started to rant.
“Well, you know, yesterday…”
“Mm, mm.”
I explained the chain of events to Rin. That said, I couldn’t tell her everything (especially not the part about Kirisaki beating up the delinquents like a berserker), so I only told her up to the point of Kirisaki being taken hostage and me trying to abandon her. Rin’s first reply was:
“You’re at fault, Kugi-chan.”
“…Well, if you think about it, I guess so. But she’s a lot stronger than you think. To the extent that delinquents aren’t a match for her. So I thought it would be alright… you know.”
Rin crossed her arms and grunted for a moment. Then she closed her eyes in thoughts.
“Say, did she mention me before she was angry?”
“Yeah, she did. Something about not being able to take her eyes off you.”
The fact that I was worried about Rin was hard to bring up, so I kept it a secret.
“She also mentioned that she would like to rest in the shadows, right?”
“Yep.”
“How did you reply to that?”
“I said: Oh, is that so.”
“…And then?”
“No, that’s all. I also said how she was a pain for not being clear about what she wanted to say.”
Rin mumbled “I see…” and turned to the side, leaking a small sigh.
“Okay, I get it.”
“Oh, really?”
“Yeah, but I won’t tell you.”
“Huh?”
“I’m not going to say anything. You’ve to figure it out by yourself, Kugi-chan.”
“Not you, too.”
“Me too?”
“Ehm, yeah. Well, an acquaintance told me something similar…”
“Is that so. But I think that person was right.”
“Why!”
I ticked my finger irritated on the desk.

“Figuring things out by myself isn’t my forte.”
It’s nothing to be proud about, but since I was born, I didn’t have friends, so I’ve no clue about the subtleties of the human heart. Seriously nothing to be proud about, just laughable.
“Then here’s a hint. Kirisaki-san might be mentally strong, smart and know a lot of things… But she’s just a girl.”
“And that’s a hint? Isn’t that obvious?”
“I think you’re close to the truth.”
I wracked my brain while saying “Huh?”. No, I was irritated. Why did I have to be so troubled over Kirisaki?
“C’mon, spare me the trifles and tell me. I don’t have the slightest clue.”
“Nope. If you’re going out with her, you’ve to figure it out and solve it by yourself.”
Then Rin said whispering.
“…Besides, it would be frustrating to kindly tell you everything.”
“What?”
“Nothing. Anyway, thing about it carefully.”
…Geez, how unusual of her. Normally Rin would meddlesome tell me all kind of things.
Well, relying too much on her kindness would be problematic too.
“…Still, Kirisaki-san doesn’t have to be so concerned about me.”
“Right.”
“Yeah, after all, she has a proper boyfriend that worries about her.”
No, that wasn’t really the case.
“She’s really lucky…”
Before I could say anything back to Rin, the chime heralded the beginning of class.
Kirisaki still didn’t look at me, even after she came back.

In the end, I didn’t find an answer after pondering the whole time. Aww, that’s why dealing with people is such a pain. Although I brought it upon myself.
Kirisaki always went home together with me no matter how annoyed, but today of all days, she left as soon as the last class ended, after she gave me a glance with a baffling face.
So I had no alternative, but to part with Rin, who was going to pick up trash in the nearby public park, and go home.
A matter you had not the slightest clue about how to resolve felt like a turbulent mist in your chest. I knew a way to clear it, but not how to achieve it.
“…Aww”
Leaking a unmeaning voice, I reached my house.
I tried to open the front door with my key… when I noticed that it was already unlocked.
“Sis? Are you home?”
Taking off my shoes, I went into the house and heard a voice from the living room.
“I’m home!”
“It’s rare for you to be back so early.”
I walked down the hallway and pulled the door curtain away. My sister was eating instant noodles.
“Nothing big was going on, so I left early. There are days like this.”
“That’s all fine, but you’re eating that stuff again.”
“It’s a new flavour!!”
“So what?”
“Eh? It’s enough reason.”
My sister answered while slurping the noodles.
“No, it’s not.”
“But…”
“But what?”
“It’s a new flavour.”
“You’re gravely mistaken if you think I’ll accept it just because you repeat it.”
“I’m surprised how unexpectedly serene you are. You sure have grown… Even though you peed on me when I

changed your diapers in the past.”
“That was long ago!”
“For me, you’ll always be the same…”
“That might sound cool, but I won’t be fooled.”
She openly clicked her tongue. Then she even slurped up the soup.
“No dinner for you when you’re already eating now.”
“No worries, I’m still growing.”
“I don’t consider putting on a few stone as growing.”
A bamboo sprout came flying at me.
“Don’t throw just your hated food at me! Or rather, don’t waste food!”
“I’m not wasting it. It’s still eatable. For you.”
“Even if I’ve to push you onto the ground, I’ll shove it into your mouth.”
“What a dreadful remark… Nothing less from the man, who peed on an innocent girl.”
“Too misleading!”
Of course she got a chop.
“Oww! Wat‘cha doing! In the first place, you speak about dinner, but you weren’t even shopping!”
“Eh? …Ah.”
I only noticed it when she pointed it out. It seemed to have forgotten to buy ingredients for dinner, since I had been spaced out.
“Damn…”
“What, you forgot? How rare. Even though you remember the smallest things well enough to be called a nitpicker despite looking like a hoodlum.”
Was I that deep in thoughts? Damn…
“…Did something happen?”
My sister asked me, who had sit down in the chair with a sigh.
“No, it’s not worth mentioning.”
“Had a fight with Kirisaki-san?”
“…Hey, how does my slump equals trouble with Kirisaki?”
“It doesn’t?”
No, it does…
“Not so much a fight.”
“Come on, tell your dear sister.”
I was hesitant and kept silent for a bit, but I was already clutching at any straw. It would be bad for my mental health if I kept worrying by myself.
I talked to her with leaving things out like with Rin.
“…That’s what happened. According to Kuon, she was angry, but I don’t really see anything that could’ve made her angry.”
“Nah, of course she got angry.”
My sister said quite indifferent.
“Being abandoned by your own boyfriend is quite harsh.”
“Well, true, but she… ehm, she’s versed in martial arts and strong, you know.”
“Even then, you’re still at fault.”
…Grr. Since I couldn’t tell her about our unique relationship, it certainly must appear that everything was my fault.
“…But that doesn’t seem to be the reason.”
“Not?”
“Yeah, well, I haven’t talked that much to her either, but I think that Kirisaki-san also understands why you did that. She’s that kind of girl. The real problem was probably the latter.”
“The latter?”
“Treating Kuon-san kindly and so on.”
“It’s not like I was treating her kindly…”

“Now, now. Your own intentions aside, let me spell it out for you.”
“…Okay.”
I inadvertently leaned forward. My sister came face to face with me and said a single word.
“Jealousy.”
“…Jealousy?”
It was an unfamiliar word.
“Well, it might not go as far as jealously. Saying she’s sulking would be more appropriate.”
“What do you mean?”
“You sure are dense.”
Affecting a sigh, my sister said.
“Listen. If her boyfriend is being nice to someone else besides her, of course she’s going to mind it. And you even went a step further. She told you that she was in the same situation as Kuon-san, but you replied with ‘Oh, is that so’. Seriously, are you mocking her?”
“No, I wasn’t…”
To begin with, she wasn’t the type to suffer from something like a heatstroke.
“You just don’t get it.”
My sister strongly hit on the table.
“Listen, you just don’t get it.”
She said it twice.
“Sure, Kirisaki-san just might be like you described her, a type that doesn’t need others to worry about her. But that’s completely unrelated to whether she wants them or not. It could even be the reason why she purposefully got caught by these delinquents.”
“Huh? What? That too?”
“Most likely. She’s also a girl after all. There are times when she wants her boyfriend to worry about her. Yet you’re only paying attention to Kuon-san and neglect Kirisaki-san. She must have thought that you would worry a bit if she gets caught by delinquents.”
“Ridiculous.”
She was doing stuff like that?
“Chop!”
My sister released her fist onto me.
“…Sis, that was obviously a punch just now.”
“Don’t sweat the details. Of course Kirisaki-san herself doesn’t consider it possible. But I guess she thought ‘What if?’, even if only for a bit. That’s what a maiden in love is all about.”
“Maiden in love?”
I banged my head on the table with my hands.
“So annooooying.”
“You’re getting a headlock next.”
“I- I’m sorry.”
I looked up to the ceiling.
“Man, so it’s like that…”
“Don’t say that. Isn’t it cute.”
“So, what am I supposed to do? Do I just have to apologize?”
My sister crossed her arms and tilted her head.
“Let’s see, I don’t think she’s still angry… On the contrary, she might feel sorry for being strangely obstinate. But you’re lacking a chance to make up. That means you need some kind of impulse.”
“Impulse?”
“An impulse that allows you both to relax and naturally admit your wrongdoings to each other.”
“I see. What should I do?”
“Why don’t you think for yourself a bit?”
“I wracked my brain already. Spare me any more.”

“You’re such a hopeless little brother…”
My sister raised her gaze in thought with a wry smile.
After a while, she clapped her hands with “Oh, I know”.

“It’s simple.”
“Yeah?”
She firmly pointed her finger at me and—
“Ask her out on a date! Tomorrow even!”
declared something outrageous.

The annoyingly blue sky sopped up the cheers that resounded at times.
The splashes of water sounded refreshing and the occasionally approaching waves cooled my hot body.
At the very edge in the sixth track of the 25m pool.
I was making myself comfortable apart from my merry classmates.
Usually it was common for swimming lessons to turn gender-segregated in high school.
However, here at Meitou Academy only the very first swimming lesson was a co-ed water ball tournament.
That said, it ended a little while ago and now we had free time.
Boys and girls alike gathered here and there, made a ruckus, talked at the pool side or communicated with each other in some kind of other way. Of course there were groups with just boys or girls too, but most of them were co-ed groups and gave off the atmosphere of a mixer. Our school had a high tolerance towards relationships with the other gender, maybe the doing of the principal, and situations like this took place nonchalantly. Some people even came to this school because of that and thus the number of students here was secured. In my opinion, there wasn’t a need for a public school to go that far and a lot of problems should arise because of it, but seeing as there hadn’t been any complaints, it seemed to somehow work out well.
Nonetheless, it wasn’t a happy recreation for me, who didn’t have any friends, let alone acquaintances and was rather spending a “dark winter of life” instead of the “springtime of life” according to my sister.
I was just spacing out without doing anything. Rin was in my field of vision. She was taking a break from her sport appointee duties and sitting under the sun by grasping her knees. When our eyes met, she waved her hand lightly at me. I replied with a short nod, whereupon she now pointed her index finger somewhere. I frowned, while she seemed to poke at the empty air. She might be trying to tell me to look that way. I faced there like I was told and blinked.
Diagonally across there was Kirisaki.
Well, we were in the same class, so it was to be expected and during the earlier ball tournament I saw her performing well, albeit making mistakes from time to time… But I was surprised to see her all by herself. I had thought for sure she would be talking to someone.
She was sitting by the pool side with her chin resting on her raised leg, showing a listless expression. It was different than usual. She replied to classmates, who occasionally called out to her, with a smile, but once they were gone, she returned to being listless.
I shifted my gaze back to Rin. She was eagerly pointing in Kirisaki’s direction and beckoning me with her chin.
“…What?”
Even while mumbling that, I recalled my conversation with my sister yesterday.
—It might not go as far as jealously. Saying she’s sulking would be more appropriate.
Sulking, huh…
Good Heavens!
She and I are a couple. We certainly decided to look like that.
However, to repeat myself, that was only feigned.

After the events with the 《organisation》, I decided to accompany Kirisaki with her atonement from beginning to end.
But that happened partly out of pity. …No, that wasn't quite right. I simply couldn't act like nothing had happened after I got to know about it. It was such a selfish reasoning.
Therefore I wasn't having any romantic feelings towards her and it should be the same for her.
"Geez…"
Fully grasping people's feelings was impossible. Half could be comprehended, but the other half was simply wishfulness and presumption. I remembered hearing that from my sister before.
Kirisaki had her own emotions, her own thoughts and feelings. She lived in accordance with them.
I had thought to understand that…
I cracked my neck and got away from the wall I had been leaning onto and moved through the water with its resistance.
I swam, cautious not to bump into anyone on the way.
I lowered my goggles that I had put up and dived silently. When I opened my eyes, I saw a lot of legs that looked like roots of trees in the wavy blue space.
I slowly and cautiously swam on.
At the same time my hand touched the wall, I crouched down on the spot.
And then—
"WRAAR!"
I suddenly shot out of the water with attitude.
"Hiii!?"
Kirisaki, showered in water, was surprised as I had never seen her before and tumbled backwards like that.
"Oh, it worked."
While combing my hair back, I raised the corners of my mouth.
"Th- The heck're you doing!"
Kirisaki quickly got back up and glared at me while pressing onto her chest.
"You're like a tumbler. By the way, you're speaking in the raw, you don't mind?"
"…Eh, Ah, y- you are so mean, Node-san!"
"Be at ease. No one else is around at the moment."
When I said so while getting out of the pool, Kirisaki looked around and made a sigh of relief.
"Anyway, you must've been one heck of surprised to go 'Hii'."
"Anyone would if a guy with a face like big foot suddenly comes out of the water."
"How rude. Actually, have you ever seen big foot?"
"I have. There was an article in the monthly occult magazine 'Atlantis' with the header 'The real one! The legendary Big Foot was finally caught!'. There was a picture as well, so there's no doubt."
"At least realize that the magazine itself is dubious."
Kirisaki screwed up her nose on my pointer, then hugged her knees with her wet hairs and stared down on the water surface.
Without any words to keep the conversation going, I looked at her.
…Still.
Considering the place we were at, Kirisaki obviously wore a swimsuit. The school one was blunt, but showed the body lines clearly. Like that, I became conscious of it— if I wanted or not. For example, well… if you follow the line downwards the nape of her neck, there come two hills. No, rather them calling them hills, it might be better to call them mountains at this size. They got a peak too after all. What am I trying to joke around here for?
That reminded me, Kirisaki had said something about "I'm quite famous when I take off my clothes" previously. At that time, I thought the idiot was being idiotic by saying idiotic stuff again, but when I looked at her like this… I realized that it wasn't necessarily a lie. For one thing the twin mountains, for another thing her firm waist from training and her comparatively juicy thighs. It was quite, how can I say, my preferred—
"Kugito."
"Hiii!?"

“…What’s wrong?”
“N- Nothing.”
“Really? That sounded like a really surprised scream, though.”
“It’s really nothing. Yeah, nothing. Seriously.”
You hear that, myself.
…Watch out. That’s Kirisaki you’re thinking about, myself. Get a grip. That’s Kirisaki. Ki.ri.sa.ki. Yeah, I somehow calmed down. It worked like a spell. That’s Kirisaki. I’ll call it the password for a come-back.
“Well, if you say so… Anyway, do you want something from me?”
“Ah, well, not quite.”
After I said so whitewashing, I scratched the top of my nose.
“You see, somehow… you’re being weird lately.”
“…That’s not true.”
“Yeah? Good then.”
I looked up to the scorching sun above my head. …..Mhm.
After staying silent for a while like that, I suddenly called out to her with “Hey”.
“What?”
“Could it be… you’re sulking?”
Kirisaki widened her eyes and instantly flushed her face.
“I- Idiot!”
Right after she said that, everyone turned to us, so she quickly covered her mouth. Next she smoothed it over with her usual sham by smiling and whispered towards me.
“What nonsense are you saying…”
“So, you’re not sulking?”
“Wh- Why would I have to sulk?”
“That’s what I want to know. Why’re you sulking?”
“Like I said, I’m not sulking.”
“Then why’re you in a bad mood?”
“I’m… not in a bad mood either.”
“In denial, huh… You know, I don’t really care either way, but when your attitude changes so obviously, it’s bugging.”
“…”
Kirisaki pursed her lips upon my words and faced forwards.
“Why concern yourself with it, if you do not care either way?”
“There you go sulking again.”
“I said I’m not sulking.”
“Seriously…”
Making a sigh, I lied down.
“To begin with, you would usually show off your swimsuit and ask stuff like ‘How is it? Does it turn you on?’.”
“You want me to say that?”
“Yep.”
When I affirmed, Kirisaki flushed her cheeks red after saying “Wha–!”.
“…I just wondered what you would do if I said that.”
“Bastard…”

Kirisaki reflexively reached out for her thigh, but needless to say, the knife wasn't there.
"Too bad for you."
Having no idea how to kill off her boiling urge, Kirisaki mumbled an "Uhh" and stuck her head between her raised knees.
"…If you aren't sulking, are you angry?"
"No."
"Then what?"
I said with a slightly forceful tone.
"Put your cards on the table already. If I've done anything wrong, I'll apologize or whatever. Though only if I indeed was wrong."
"…It's not like you were wrong."
"Then, are you? Are you depressed from reflecting over it?"
"I guess, ultimately it comes to that… but"
"But?"
"You're a bit at fault too."
…What the.
"I say you're at fault, but it's not like you were entirely wrong, kind of…"
Kirisaki gave an unusual inarticulate answer as her feelings were too complex.
"…Oh boy."
Saying so, I placed my hand on top of her head.
"Are you free this coming Sunday?"
"? What do you mean?"
"Let's talk properly about which of us is at fault. After we watched a movie or so."
Kirisaki blinked.
"A movie… on Sunday? With you?"
"Well, if you don't want to, forget it. But I don't want this vague unpleasant situation to go on. I would rather invest some time and clear it up."
"Well, you have a point, but… why a movie?"
"That's…"
Damn. So far everything went smoothly, so I overlooked this contradiction. There was no way I could tell her it was because my sister said "Ask her out on a date".
"Well, my grandma was standing by my bed last night and said she couldn't go to heaven unless I go watch a movie…"
"I don't see the connection between your grandmother going to heaven and you seeing a movie, though…"
"Actually, the fortune-telling on TV this morning said I would be cursed if I don't go see a movie."
"Isn't that more of a threat than a fortune-telling?"
"….."
"….."
I was out of ideas.
"Anyway, a movie! A movie, you hear! We're going to watch a movie! I want to see one, okay! Got a problem?"
I said, kind of snapping even though I brought it up.

For me, a resting day was literally a day to rest.
After getting up later than usual in the morning, I bang on the door of my sister's room to wake her up and take her to the bathroom. Then I make breakfast and do some laundry… After all that, I have free time until evening, so I just laze around. I never went outside to have fun. I couldn't understand why anyone would purposefully do something exhausting on a holiday.
However, right now I was waiting at the fountain plaza in front of the Meitou Station.

As the shopping district was near, the place was rather crowded. Youngsters my age or slightly above gathered here and there, chatting happily. I was surprised how they could stay so energetically in this damn heat, but realized that right now I was one of them.
I stood there for a while, whereupon a familiar figure appeared from far away. It was Kirisaki. When she noticed me, she came rushing over.
“Yo.”
“…Mm.”
Normally she would stab me as a greeting, but today she wasn’t getting ready to do that. Not like I was looking forward to that. Seriously. No kidding. I’ve to make this clear for my dignity.
“…..”
“…..”
An awkward silence.
Now then— I went through my simulation in my head once more.
This morning my sister spotted me sharp sighted when I was getting ready to leave, and said to me.
“A date? It’s a date? You’re going on a date?”
Ignoring my denial, she nodded to herself with “So you’re finally listen to my advice honestly now!”, then
“But knowing you, you’ll only make things worse than before from some kind of screw up. Listen to your sister’s advice carefully and implement it.”
I got detailed instructions about “how to fix the girlfriend’s mood with a date”, even though I hadn’t asked for it. …
She didn’t even have a boyfriend herself.
Well, whatever. Anyway, advice #1.
“Compliment her clothes as soon as you meet. Anything will do. Like it’s cute or anything similar. Doing that will already influence the later development.”
Wondering if it really worked like that, I said.
“…Hey, Kirisaki.”
“What?”
“Your clothes… ehm, are cute?”
“What’re you asking me that for…”
Right.
“…Well, you see. Ehm, your clothes… are… you know, ehm… positive!”
“That’s your idea of appreciating clothes?”
Yes, it was impossible for me. Damn it. Ehm, advice #2 is…
“The next important thing is to keep a conversation going. Any topic is fine, just talk about it happily, because once the conversation dies and the silence drags on, it tends to get awkward.”
…Mhm, well, that much is obvious. A topic…
“At any rate.”
“Mm?”
“…At any rate.”
“Mm.”
“Ehm… At any rate!”
“Mm?”
“…At any rate, I mean.”
“…Mm.”
Did that count as a conversation?
“D- Did you watch TV yesterday?”
“No, just the news on the internet. What did you watch?”
“…Sorry, I hardly ever watch TV.”
What am I raising the subject for then?
Damn, it were all fruitless efforts.
There was no way we could relax like that.

Whatever. Let's just get over with it. After the movie, we'll naturally have a conversation about the content without doubt. Afterwards I'll just get smoothly to the topic at hand.
"…What's up, Kugito? You're being strange."
"Just your imagination. Alright, let's get going to the movie."
I averted my eyes from Kirisaki's puzzled face and started walking quickly.

…In the long run, the choice of "watching a movie" wasn't wrong.
However, it wasn't right either.
The narration said "The Bear on screen. For his precious friends, for his dear lover and to protect all these that shoulder grief— The most popular stuffed animal in Japan 'Bearzawa' from the Talking Bear series, staged by Breaker's director Beeven Grayer in full CG animation. The ultimate survival action romance movie with a stuffed animal. Soon in your cinema! Have you seen true love—?"
A preview of the coming works was shown at the entrance of the cinema with a huge projector. …Into what kind of world was that Bear going to jump?
No, that didn't matter now. I said to Kirisaki next me.
"…Are you okay?"
"Yeah, I'm fine."
Contrary to her words, she was unsteady on her feet and restless.
Her face was lightly flushed and her eyes a bit blank.
Maybe we should have gone somewhere more unconstrained after all. I regretted it a bit, no, regretted it quite a lot.
At first, Kirisaki and I were supposed to watch the new instalment of a run-of-the-mill action series. They were showing a romance or adolescent one too, and Kirisaki seemed to be fine with these as well, but I wasn't particular interested, so I decided against it. However, that principally turned out to be my biggest mistake.
It was Sunday noon and the only large movie theatre in the area, so there was a long line in front of the ticket shop. We waited orderly, although fed up, and our turn finally came around, but the ticket vendor gave us an unexpected statement.
"I beg your pardon, the 2:15 o'clock showing for 'Battle Crusher Ryuuga 5′ you requested is already sold out."
Until just recently you could get a standing place even when the showing was sold out, but nowadays cinemas changed to a sitting only system and standing was forbidden in most. The same was true for here. And to add to our bad luck, the other shows also sold out while we stood in line.
I thought about giving up the movie, but we came all the way here. When I asked if there were tickets left for some other movie, the vendor answered like this.
"Just for one."
"Then that'll have to do. What's the name?"
After lightly tapping the touch panel at his hands, he looked up and showed a business smile.
"'Ripper Jack vs. Jason Voorhees', Sir."
Not good, crossed my mind.
I was convinced that watching it nevertheless was my mistake.
Ripper Jack vs. Jason Voorhees was a trite panic horror movie. Although made in Hollywood, it was a stereotypical movie that only tried everything to scare the audience. A normal person would call it an easy-going movie that you could watch by turning off your brain.
However, Kirisaki was different.
She felt sexual pleasure from killing or wounding someone. For someone like her, scenes of people getting mangled with knifes or getting cut into pieces with a hatchet were like a porn. And seeing that for nearly two hours seemed to have upset Kirisaki's spirit a bit.
"Well… Sorry. We shouldn't have watched it after all."
"I don't… mind. I didn't stop you, knowing what kind of movie it is… I'm at fault too."
Saying so haltingly, Kirisaki made a coquettish sigh.
"…For now, let's sit down on that bench."
So she said, but seeing as she wasn't even able to walk properly, I inevitable took her by the hand.

“Sorry.”
“Don’t fret it. Let’s rest for a bit.”
After letting her sit on the bench in the shadows, I bought sports drinks at a nearby vending machine. I sat down next to her and handed her one.
“Thanks…”
Kirisaki mumbled, opened the lid and drank a bit.
“…You sure have a troublesome habitude.”
Kirisaki made a little wry smile with “Certainly”.
“…But why didn’t you say anything? You didn’t know it would turn out like this?”
“No… I knew, but”
“But?”
“Well…”
While trying to cool down her face even a bit by holding the can against her cheek, she mumbled.
“…Because I somewhat admired it.”
“Admired?”
“I mean—”
She averted her eyes and whispered with a small voice.
“Watching a movie with my boyfriend… I admired that kind of situation.”
I inadvertently spouted out the juice.
“What? You’ve a problem with it?”
“No… not really.”
That was exactly what a teenager girl would say. Well, she IS a teenager girl.
“What can I do, I never did anything together with anyone before.”
“…Guess so. My bad.”
Feeling guilty over how inconsiderate I was, I lowered my head a bit. To punish herself for her forbidding fate, Kirisaki had lived in solitude up till now. Therefore she had not a single experience of a normal teenager girl. Due to that, an innocent maiden side came to the surface from time to time, contrary to her usual behaviour. That surely was her true self.
Still, what now… She was in no state to have a talk.
For the time being, I should let her go home merciful—
Just when I thought so, my sleeve was suddenly pulled.
“…Mh? What’s up?”
I asked— whereupon Kirisaki looked at me and said.
“Kugito, forgive me. I’m… at my limit.”
Her eyes, looking up to me, were damp. Her cheeks were flushed like during a fever and her hand was entwined around my arm like she was asking for something. …Even without a hunch, I knew this was bad.
“No, hold it. The sun’s still up… wait, I’m only making it worse. Anyway, don’t, okay?”
“M- Meanie…”
“Stop with the misleading remarks!”
What am I supposed to do here!?
“Well, I need to calm down a bit… It would be troublesome if my underwear gets wet again after changing.”
Your statements are troublesome!!
“F- For now, calm down. Okay?”
“In order for me to calm down, why don’t we go into the shadows over there…?”
“That’ll make me lose my calm though…”
Kirisaki stood up slowly. Still grabbing my arm, she forcefully pulled me along.

“Kirisaki! Hold it! Seriously, stop! Think this over! Let’s talk it out, okay?”
Like that, I was dragged towards a back alley between two buildings. This girl wasn’t listening at all.
“N- Nooo!”
My scream was in vain too.
As soon as we entered the back alley, I was merciless tossed away.
Furthermore, Kirisaki flipped her skirt and drew her knife at the same time.
Then she got on top of me, who was lying down face-up. Deja vu! I’m getting a deja vu!
Kirisaki exerted a strength that you wouldn’t expect from her slender build.
She forcefully pushed me down as I was trying to resists and showed a gruesome smile. A deja vu alright!
“…Forgive me, Kugito.”
At the same time Kirisaki mumbled that—
My body was stabbed without hesitation, first in the stomach.
“Guh”
This nightmare again after a long time!
Without even time for such thoughts—
In the next moment, a stabbing show like raging billows started.

I must have been stabbed a dozen times.
I couldn’t be certain, because I stopped counting midway after growing tired of it.
After stabbing my arms, stomach and chest right and left as she pleased, I thought it was finally over, but Kirisaki unbelievably spouted “Now that got me started”, so my brain stopped paying attention to the reality before my eyes at this point.
I no longer felt the commonplace emotion called pain. To begin with, pain was something like a signal to warn oneself about harm to the body, so once the situation crossed the initial goal of “alerting”, it might just cut off. At least in my case.
Anyway— When I came back to my senses, everything was over. Just like that.
In front of my eyes was Kirisaki, splattered in blood and breathing roughly. Speaking of, how does she plan to get home? Although our current society might be corrupted, I wouldn’t think it was so bad that a high school girl dyed in fresh blood could walk around unperturbed. Wait, was this really the time to worry about that? … As frightening as it sounds, I might have grown accustomed to her.
“Feel better now?”
When I asked, Kirisaki’s eyes staring into empty space became focused. The expression “returning to one’s senses” fit this perfectly.
“…Kugito…”
She answered with feeble voice. She looked down at her hand, which was still holding the blood drenched knife.
After she alternating looked at me and the knife, she closed her eyes and mumbled.
“…I held back as much as possible.”
Well, knowing her, she certainly did held back.
“For now, get off.”
Kirisaki obediently obeyed my request and got off me, slumping down next to me. I stood up and took my clothes that lay on the side. My wounds hadn’t healed yet, but they weren’t bleeding anymore.
I put on my shirt, then my jacket. In the meantime, Kirisaki looked at me with a side-glance and had an exhausted expression. That reminded me, I was on bad terms with Kirisaki lately, where we didn’t even get to talk. She might have released everything that had piled up so far.
“Are you okay?”
While I asked that, I was shocked about myself for this completely inappropriate question. I should be more

concerned about the well-being of my own body.
Kirisaki nodded wordless.
“…Sorry.”
“Well… I won’t tell you it’s okay, but this time I also reap what I sow.”
I should’ve somewhat predicted this development. It was all due to my carelessness.
“In that way, you aren’t solely at fault.”
“Sorry…”
“No, like I said—”
“Not just about now.”
Kirisaki said quietly while still looking down.
“I’m sorry for acting so weird the last few days.”
“Well, that…”
I was confused at the unexpected development.
An impulse that allows you both to relax and naturally admit your wrongdoings to each other.
I remembered my sister’s words.
…I see. So things went according to plan, albeit in a queer way.
Although I got the feeling that the price I paid for it was too high— For the time being, all’s well.
“…Well, I also, kind of, went too far, yeah.”
When I said that, Kirisaki looked at me. But she immediately averted her gaze again.
“No… You aren’t at fault.”
“Don’t be so fussy. Let’s just say I was at fault too.”
“No.”
Kirisaki shook her head powerless. When I frowned doubtful, she continued after a while.
“You did nothing wrong. Sure, you and I are boyfriend and girlfriend. However, that’s only in front of others. As a matter of fact, I’m not allowed to have romantic feelings for you.”
I know that, she mumbled.
“Whichever way you look at it, I’m a murderer. The most worthless, disgusting and worst kind of human. I cannot fall in love with anyone. I knew that… when I came to know about my true nature.”
Kirisaki spoke indifferent.
“So even when I started dating you, I kept telling that to myself. I’m taking advantage of you. But you stayed by my side despite that. So I thought it was fine just like that. We cannot be lovers, let alone friends. But someone was accepting my true self. I believed that was enough for me.
…Yet— Despite that, I suddenly found myself acting like a normal student sometimes when I talked with you, which worried me. Of course I denied it right away and scolded myself, tucking away these feelings in the back of my heart.”
Nevertheless—
Her voice gradually became emotional.
“…It’s strange. I should’ve kept them under wraps, but before I noticed, I was thinking the same stuff somewhere in my heart again. Even though I’ve no right to, even though just thinking about it is a sin… even though I understand it in my head.”
She looked up to me.
“When I saw you being nice to Kuon Rin, a detestable feeling arose within me. That is, why wasn’t it me? That is, why won’t you do anything for me? Stupid, isn’t it?
What arrogance. A feeling so unsavoury that it would be presumptuous to call it selfishness.”
Holding the knife with both hands, she pressed it into her chest.
“That’s why I ended up doing that. I figured that I had to make you worry, so that you would turn to me even just a bit —”
Then she showed a dry smile.
“…What’s up?”
“Don’t you think it’s cute?”

She closed her eyes. At that time, a small drop of water fell down from her eyelid, ran down her cheek and dropped onto the ground.
“Just like—”
She said with a feeble voice while shaking.
“—Just like a normal girl.”
She whispered with a stiff voice.
“This never happened before. I could always stifle myself before. So… I didn’t know what to do. How do I interact with you? I got the feeling that if things go on like this, I will definitely head in a direction that I’m not supposed to—”
“You…”
I didn’t know how to respond to that.
No one ever confronted me with their feelings so directly like this.
Nor did anyone seek my existence to such an extent.
If Kirisaki were a normal girl— what would I do? Accept her? Push her away? Or brush it off evasively? …Either way, it would surely have turned into a run-off-the-mill development from a romance movie afterwards.
However, Kirisaki was different.
It wasn’t a problem about simple feelings like love or hate.
She must start to face this feeling, which she ended up with, from now on. I believe that she continued to suffer and conflict with it until now.
Then, how— am I going to respond to her?
Think, Node Kugito.
This is the path you chose.
To accompany Kirisaki Kyouko in any way, shape or form from beginning to end, no matter what awaits.
“…..”
I kept silent for a long time. In the meantime, I wracked my brain. I kept doing so endless.
And then, I approached Kirisaki and sat cross-legged besides her.
“…Uhm, you know.”
While scratching my head, I somehow put my unsorted feeling into words.
“If you don’t know what to do— You can only worry until you do, can’t you?”
“…What, do you mean?”
“Like you said, you might be the worst. But you aren’t making any excuses like having an inevitable reason. Therefore… I think it’s okay for you to lose your way a bit.”
I kept going on, albeit knowing how clumsy it sounded.
“So, uhm, well… as long as you don’t choose ‘to run away’ or give up thinking, then I think it’s at least alright to worry about what to do.”
Kirisaki listened in silence. I continued.
“You said you always stifled it, but that’s probably not it. You only became negligent. Living alone sure is tiresome, but in a way, it’s also easier not to concern yourself with others.”
For example, my current self. Spending every day aimlessly in a state, where I didn’t know if I was alive or dead.
“…Such a lifestyle won’t get you anything, but it won’t make you lose anything either. There are people, who’re fine with that, like myself. But you’re trying to break away from that, right? In that case, it’s only natural that it’ll be tough.”
When someone, who lived an abnormal life, tried to live a normal life, obstacles were bound to occur. Reasoning stopped everyone at a certain line. And those, who ended up crossing that line, couldn’t return so easily, even if they wanted to out of regret. There was always a wall that prevented it, which is how it should be.
“…But I don’t think that those, who don’t reflect about themselves, have any right to lament about their actions. Judgement will just be passed on them one-sided. But you’re different. So… Don’t give up from the start and properly worry until you find an answer.”
“But… that might take a long time.”
“I’ll wait. I promised you to be with you.”
“The answer I find might not necessarily be right.”
“You’re looking not for the right answer.”

I placed my hand on Kirisaki's lowered head.
"In other words, what matters is to settle things for yourself."
"…What if it turns out twisted?"
"That won't happen."
I declared.
"I know you. Not the 《Midnight killing Devil》. Nor the girl who puts on a superficial smile at school. But the human called Kirisaki Kyouko. So I can say this: You won't do anything to deceive yourself."
Slowly standing up, I looked down at her.
"So think for yourself until you find your own answer about what to do."
Kirisaki looked up at me. She muttered with narrowed eyes.
"…When I find my answer— will you let me hear your reply?"
I kept my mouth shut for a moment upon her question. I scratched my cheek and averted my eyes.
"Well— To be honest, I'm not sure how to react, because I don't often get someone to bare everything about oneself to me like this."
Nevertheless, I made a wry smile and said at least this.
"…Well, I'll also think about what to do when that time comes."
"For sure."
Kirisaki finally smiled. A smile from the bottom of her heart that she won't show to anyone besides me.
"…Thanks, Kugito."
I gave a vague reply like Mm or Uh-huh. …Why was it so awkward?
"F- For now, act like before. Being meek is all fine, but it's hard to deal with."
"…Yeah, right. Sorry."
"Well, as long as you understand."
Kirisaki stood up slowly. Looking at my body, she smiled wryly.
"But I have to say, I really went a bit too far this time."
"Oh, I'm partly at fault too, so don't fret it."
"No, that won't work. It's not just about today. I felt I had to thank you for everything up till now."
"Thank?"
"Mm…"
Kirisaki looked around restlessly. Beyond the back alley, there was a fast food restaurant from a famous chain.
"How about I treat you to lunch there?"
Was my life worth a hamburger set?
"I'm getting kinda sad…"
"…No, I was just joking."
Kirisaki made a bittersweet smile, then pondered for a while with her head tilted.
However, she suddenly clapped her hands with "I know".
"We will go to a hotel now and you can have your way with me."
"Yay, thanks! … If that's the answer you're expecting from me, I will give you a good long speech about what kind of guy I am."
"But I thrust my knife in you, so you can thrust in me too and we will be 'thrust buddies'…"
"Stop with the puns."
After I said that, I dealt a blow with my fist onto her head.
"Ow!"
"Enough nonsense. We're going home. …But before that, clothes."
I threw Kirisaki my jacket.
"…? What?"
"Have you seen yourself? My jacket is big, so you can hide the blood with it. Just button up the front. And your skirt won't stand out, since it got a sober colour."
Saying so, I turned on my heel and started walking. I heard Kirisaki following behind me.
At any rate, it somehow came to an amicable… amicable? Well, reconcilable solution. It felt like a weight had been

taken off my shoulders.
That said, I got the feeling that the problems increased rather than being solved— But oh well. I won't sweat the details.
At least for now.
"…Now onto the next news."
When we walked for a while after leaving the back alley, we got back in front of the cinema from before.
The huge projector there wasn't showing previews anymore, but the evening news now.
"Yesterday night, in the gray of the morning, a policeman on patrol found Mifune Kaori-san, a local high school girl, collapsed on the street. Mifune-san was brought to the hospital, but passed away soon afterwards. She had signs of being strongly hit on the head with a blunt object and it's believed to be directly related to her passing. There were no traces of a robbery, so the police is investigating under the assumption of a murder-orientated random assault. Furthermore, the incident took place not far away from a similar case the other day, which leads the mass media to the opinion that we are dealing with the same criminal, but the police spokesman has not confirmed that in it's entirety."
Again?, I thought, because the case sounded familiar. It happened when society started to calm down after the news about the arrest of the 《Midnight killing Devil》.
Just like the news reported, a high school girl was found beaten to death in the same way as the current incident. The point of no robbery was also the same. If it really was the same criminal, then more would get killed from now on…?
For some reason or another, I watched the news, whereupon the two girls of my age in uniforms, who had walked by near, stopped and started talking to each other.
"Oh, again."
"Again what?"
"The news just now. There was a similar case before, remember. A girl was beaten to death."
"Yeah…?"
"Yep! Maybe it's true after all…"
"What, what?"
"Well, I only read it on the internet, too."
"Mh-mm."
"What was it again… Ah, right, 《Death Eater Clown》. It said it's a really scary and big guy that only goes after high school girls."
"Huh, a weirdo?"
"Not a weirdo, but a phantom. Like, there's this rumour that this guy also did the previous incident."
"Eh. Why?"
"Don't know. The reason's unknown."
"Kinda scary."
"Well, it's just a rumour, though."
"I hope so…"
The two stopped their chatting and left.
Desu Iitaa Kuraun…? What the. Desu meant Death and Iitaa was Eater alright, but Kuraun… A crown, so a prince? Or not?
"《Death Eater Clown》, huh… I thought it would just stay gossip, but that's some unexpected development."
Kirisaki muttered. I looked at her.
"《Death Eater Clown》?"
"An urban legend in the same league as the slit mouthed woman, the dog with a human face or the Tsukuba Robot. When the same crime happened before like the news just reported, it became a rumour on the internet."
"What's with the Tsukuba Robot?"
"If I member correctly, it's a person so big that you have to look up to, carries a blunt weapon and wears a clown-like mask like the name implies. And when you loiter around at night, it asks you when no one is around.
—'Do you know why you are going to die?'

Apparently you get killed with the blunt weapon then if you can't answer. And for some reason, the target is always a high school girl."
…Fine, I'll look up the Tsukuba Robot myself.
"Why's there such a rumour?"
"Probably because of it's cruel execution, the unknown motif and— most likely, because no other major nasty incident happened after the arrest of the 《Midnight killing Devil》"
"…Certainly."
In short, it was the perfect material for a new fuss.
Their interest had simply shifted from the 《Midnight killing Devil》 to the 《Death Eater Clown》 and the fuss they made over it hadn't changed at all from before. In other words, a keyword. When it was "grotesque", "unheard-of", "gloomy" or "cruel", it's welcomed as a trickster in the boring daily life. Much to my regret, even I would be like that if I hadn't been involved with Kirisaki and Rin. That's just how it is, was my only excuse.
"So the 《Death Eater Clown》… But does someone like that really exist?"
"You wouldn't call it an urban legend when it actually exists. Or do you think there actually is a human, who can run 100m in five seconds or jump higher than a five floor building or easily smash concrete with it's hands?"
I don't. That's a super hero straight out of a movie.
"It's just a silly rumour created by someone for fun. To begin with, all victims died and there are no witnesses, so how could anyone get their hands on detailed information about the 《Death Eater Clown》?"
Indeed. Anyway, it was hideous.
However… I thought at this point.
After the 《Midnight killing Devil》 incident was resolved, I thought peace had come back and even convinced myself that it would last forever.
But needless to say, reality was different. On a daily basis, someone was hurt, hurt someone or lost something/someone in the world.
The despair I tasted was nothing but a fragment of the shadow that crept over everything in the world.
Even while Kirisaki and I were troubled over various things, new tragedies happened one after another and bystanders were attracted to it just to satisfy their curiosity. Lies, facts, endless rumours— It was all a repetition of the same thing.
There might be nothing to be done about it, which was kind of frothily.
Then I suddenly remembered Haru. A lot had happened, so I forgot, but— nothing had settled for Kirisaki in it's true meaning, even when there was a new incident and the world forgot about the 《Midnight killing Devil》.
"…Reminds me."
"Mh?"
"Well, I forgot to tell you before, but after the trouble with the delinquents and you went home, that woman came by."
"What woman?"
"You know, the one from the 《organisation》…"
"You mean me?"
"Yep, yep, you—wait, wot!"
Suddenly a voice came from behind me without any presence and I sprang up in surprise. When I turned around, she stood there inexpressive as ever.
"…That was a somewhat ordinary reaction. The timing was bad as well."
"To think I would get lectured about that by you…"
That woman, Kaousonemiya Haruka… No, Haru averted her eyes from me and faced Kirisaki. She said shortly.
"Kirisaki Kyouko."
"…Yeah, I know."
"Good then."
Making a small nod, Haru said.
"—You have orders."